

PHILIP KYRITSIS

TOTAL OBJECTOR

in time of general conscription

Autobiography

Part 1



ATHENS 2025

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Editing: Filippas Kyritsis

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To my children Kristiana and Giorgos to learn what I did in my life, how I did it and why I did it, as well as to everyone who found themselves stuck in difficult situations and thought they were to blame for it.

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PROLOGUE

The reason I took the time and effort to write my autobiography is, more or less, the same reason I kept a journal 36 years ago of the adventures I experienced as a result of my struggle to avoid conscription. Then, as now, I wanted those who had the misfortune of being involved in such adventures in the past, and those who would be involved in the future, to be informed that they were not and will not be alone. Living in a society of rulers and ruled, exploiters and exploited, it is inevitable that the lower one is in the social pyramid, the more one is affected by the evil that characterizes social life, i.e. the more one suffers from the evil and stupidity that are endemic in all societies.

But why did I want then and want, now and always, to inform others about what I consider worthy of being informed? I wanted it and I want it because I believe that the development of civilization and the facilitation of our life on this planet is due to the information we inherit from those who have lived on it in the past, at least those that are not lies or are not useless to others. I consider as lies the official views of any authority, religious, military, political or otherwise, which are intended to convince us that we needed and need such authorities and therefore distort the truth both of what has been done in the past and of what is done now, as for what will happen in the future. The so-called "Revelation", described in the Christian holy book known as the New Testament, is one such characteristic lie. As is the existence of life after death! I consider this kind of information unworthy of being passed down from generation to generation, and if it is passed down, it obviously does harm.

On the other hand, I consider particularly useful the information on what someone who does not want to serve the murderous apparatus called the army suffers, and on how someone ends up coming into conflict with all kinds of rulers and exploiters who make his life difficult. Something that is at the heart of my memories that I have included in my autobiography. Such information is useful to those who have walked or will walk such roads. Useful so that those who have walked do not feel guilty for their mistakes and weaknesses and those who intend to walk on such roads to know what to watch out for and how to defend themselves against their enemies. For the choices I made in my life, in general at least, I do not regret and I urge others to make similar choices. That is, I don't regret not joining the army, just as I don't regret fighting for a better society and a more humane life, as anarchism sees them.

To those who are sick of hearing about -isms, and perhaps resent someone defending anarchism, I want to assure you that I am not defending anarchist

theories in general, but those that put the individual above all else. The specific person that each of us is with all the strengths and weaknesses, and not a model person, as advertised by various nationalisms and various socialist and communist theories. I see the person, above all, as a body and that's why I consider evil primarily what harms his body. The most common harm to bodies is caused by the inability to satisfy their natural needs (among which is the need for love, even if this disturbs the prudish), diseases, natural disasters and wars. That is why, from the anarchist theories, I chose and supported those that defend the human body, claiming for everyone shelter, food, clothing, access to education and medical care, protection of the environment and ecosystems and opposition to all forms of violence, beyond the violence that is unavoidable in order to defend one's own life, such as e.g. violence against every thug and every rapist. It is obvious that against such forms of violence only violence can be opposed by anyone to defend himself. But the violence of wars is not inevitable, if we consider that wars are the continuation of politics by other means. This kind of politics has always been something anarchism denounced. Even if this policy is characterized as a national liberation struggle or a class struggle. The difference between anarchism and other social theories is that it does not equate the good for the individual with the good for the group, be it a nation or a class. Wars, whether they are fought for the country, whether they are fought for religion or fought for the working class, the peasantry or any other class, are always bad for those who are injured, raped (especially women) or killed in them. I don't want to suffer any of the above and that's why I defend the individual against those who are supposed to defend the interests of the group (nation, religious community, social class, etc.). Groups are made up of individuals, and if individuals suffer as they defend the groups, it is actually the groups themselves who suffer.

But the truth is that I didn't write my autobiography just for others, i.e. it wouldn't go to waste even if it wasn't read. As I consider that the diaries I kept in 1987-1988 and which formed my book "To Trelocharto" were not lost. Writing, and literature in general, is not only addressing others. It is also "bleeding of the soul" as I had read on a blackboard in the "office" of the writer Leonidas Christakis¹. It is a type of psychotherapy. The well-known archaeologist Errikos Schliemann, considering writing to be psychotherapy, called the office in his house, on Panepistimiou Street (which now houses the Numismatic Museum), "dispensary of the soul", as anyone visiting the Numismatic Museum can see. If we now admit that each person needs a place in the world, a social identity, in some way, by which he can be recognized

¹In particular, he had written "A pen for bleeding the soul" on the board.

by others because otherwise he becomes mentally ill, as the famous psychiatrist Ronald Laing showed in his books "The Divided Self" and "The Self and Others", then an autobiography or a literary work that directly or indirectly delimits this position of ours in the world, they help us maintain our mental balance. It is no coincidence that in conditions of isolation and sensory deprivation in prisons, some prisoners resort to writing to avoid feeling incurably isolated. Writing reminds them that they are members of humanity and in humanity they have a certain place, no matter how hard every form of authority tries to convince them that they do not exist for others.

The position of each person in society, which one seeks to clarify through writing, is not only limited to the present but also to the past. Many times I wondered, as I believe we all do, what position I had in society during my life. Because, without a doubt, our position in society is not something definitive, like a university degree, for example. It differs not only in each moment of our life but also in different geographical environments. We are not the same now as we were decades ago, even a few years ago, as we are not the same for other peoples when we find ourselves in their countries. Through an autobiography, all the social identities with which society has provided the individual over time, or depending on where he is, are unified in one, which takes the form of a travel document on the great journey of life. This travel document is especially useful for people who, due to luck or their own choices, constantly face the questioning of the position they have managed to occupy in society. To be more clear, I say that such a travel document is not necessary, e.g. for a doctor or a lawyer who is constantly sought out by his patients or clients, but for one whom authority can hardly classify him somewhere and grant him a "social shelter". Or one who questions the position that society has recognized for him, such as, e.g. the position of the criminal. An American death row inmate of the last century, Caryl Chessman, until he was executed in the electric chair, wrote books and documents for his legal defense, where he argued that he is not the criminal that the state and mass media portrayed him to be. Chessman's writing was not only for him the most reliable solace in his misery but also was an excellent piece of writing for those who are able to appreciate such a thing and not characterize a work from the biography of its creator. I think the written work of the Greek ex-lifer Giannis Petropoulos had and still has the same value, both for him and for the readers of his books.

Another reason why someone takes the time and effort to write an autobiography is the satisfaction he feels when, within the pages of his book, describes the people he met in various phases of his life and now are dead and belong to the past. If he has good memories of them, then he is satisfied that he was appreciated during his life by these same people and this fact protects him from his existential doubts. If,

he has vices he is satisfied with the fact that he is handing down to posterity a negative image of them and thus takes a kind of revenge against them, negatively affecting the historical memory of them. And this memory matters in the event that posterity wants to imitate them. Indeed, in the case where the persons mentioned in an autobiography have been colleagues in misery, as, for example, fellow inmates in a prison, he who writes about them feels that he is fulfilling a moral obligation to them. He does not doubt that they would like their suffering to have a place in history and not be treated as if they never existed. I have no doubt that, if the people who suffered with me were alive, they would be glad that I speak of them in my autobiography, and that makes me, when I write about them, feel that I am fulfilling a moral obligation that I have towards them.

I have often wondered if my life is so interesting that anyone would be interested in reading about it, as the public is interested in reading biographies or autobiographies of important personalities. The first thing I thought was that for me, my own life is more important than other people's lives, first of all because it is my own life. This is not as obvious as it seems. Every form of power seeks to make those who wield it not respect and value themselves. To feel that they are insignificant and unimportant to others to the extent that they do not accumulate wealth or glory. This self-deprecation, apart from other institutions, is promoted by the public school. That's why both male and female students find it normal to be called "stupid" and for their friends to treat them in a way that seeks to diminish them. I think I never swallowed the fairy tale of self-depreciation that the school served me and the army would also confirm if I had served in it. Since, then, I have not lost my self-respect and self-esteem, is it not natural that I should recognize in myself the right to write an autobiography? And I'm not ashamed of the mistakes I've made and I report them to it, because I've always, at least since I was little, tried not to make mistakes and to be excellent in everything. I am not ashamed of my mistakes because they were made out of my weakness and not because I considered them the right choices. I wish everyone, who deserves to be appreciated, valued themselves as I do and wrote autobiographies. Unfortunately, however, many of those who write autobiographies do not deserve any appreciation, and if they consider themselves important, it is because they have been marketed as such by every authority. For example, the military men who have caused many people to be injured and killed, while they do not deserve credit for this reason, they consider themselves important and are not a few of them who write autobiographies. For me, those who deserve more respect are the rebels and deserters of the wars because

their attitude proves that they respect human life and first of all their own. Indeed, if their refusal to serve in the army affected their whole lives, as it happened to me, then the description of this life in an autobiography has a more general value for the whole society, since they are good examples to follow.

And two technical observations:

My autobiography extends to 2017 not because later I didn't experience important moments worth mentioning but because an autobiography is not a diary that lasts until someone's death. About the important moments that are not mentioned in an autobiography because they appeared in someone's life later, his biographers can write, or anyway, those who are interested. Nevertheless in what I wrote, one finds a fairly complete picture of who I thought I was in my life.

Also, in its original form my autobiography was not divided into so many subsections with so many headings. It was divided into twenty chapters, now in the table of contents headed by capital letters. I added so many sub-chapter headings much later and after I had read Maria Alyokhina's book "Riot Days". This book is divided into many sub-chapters, which could be thought of as paragraphs, each of which is followed by a heading, rather than preceding the heading in each one.

Reading Alyokhina's book, I realized that the times we live in today are very different in terms of how one addresses others, compared to the times when I was young or later middle-aged. Back then, there were not so many means of expression, such as websites and social networks, which offer information with few words and a lot of audio-visual material, such as videos and podcasts. Thus one could find the patience to read many pages that were not interrupted by sub- chapter or paragraph headings. Now it is very difficult to do such a thing, someone who has learned in image and sound and indeed in image and sound of short duration, as are the young people, who grew up with the internet and social networks. As it is very difficult even for old people like me to read voluminous books with detailed opinions and long-winded descriptions, when I don't need nice words repeated in various ways to get opinions, when there is so much information on the internet, or long-winded descriptions that can be replaced by images that also abound on the internet. This is why I divided the book into so many sub- chapters, that their titles are the contents. I didn't want anyone who would be in a good mood to read it to suffer. And with so many sub-chapters one is not obliged to read it all. He can read whatever interests him the most.

Finally, for those who are disturbed or resentful of what I write and oppose the dissemination of the book, I have to say that they oppose not only me but also all those who are mentioned in this book and there are no such references to them elsewhere. I think this book to some extent describes an era, the era I lived in.

Athens 6-15-2023

BIRTH AND EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

The demystification of the great communist leader Stalin

I was born in Athens, in the "Alexandra" public maternity hospital, on April 25, 1956. This year has remained in my memory, not only because it was the year of my birth, but also because it is the year of 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), where the general secretary (head) of the party officially declared the end of the Stalinist dictatorship, a dictatorship that in absurdity, cruelty and inhumanity reached, or even surpassed, Hitler's Nazi regime in Germany. And yet at that time for the leftists in Greece, Stalin and the social regime of the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the Nazi regime (indeed they saw it as the most credible opponent of such a regime) and those of them who had organizational relations with the illegal then in Greece Communist Party of Greece (K.K.E.), whether they were free or in prison or in exile (and there were many of them), constituted a party army with strict discipline and without any democratic right to participate in the decisions of the leadership of the party. These were more or less dictated by the CPSU. They too lived, in short, the dictatorial Stalinist regime in its intra-party Greek version.

The history of CPSU and of its counterpart, the K.K.E., are important to me, because both my father's family and my mother's family were leftists, with all the negative consequences this had for their lives, because the left in Greece was involved in a civil war with the right, during and after World War II, and lost it. This had the consequence that the leftists were second-class citizens, like the national minorities and immigrants today, i.e. they had to face a myriad of problems that the Greek state created for them, because they were leftists. My father's only brother, in fact, who later became my godfather, from 1947 to 1954, I think, was in prison with a 20-year sentence, under the Compulsory Law 375/1936, which had been enacted by the Greek fascist dictator Metaxas. My uncle did not serve his entire sentence because he had earlier suffered from tuberculosis of the bones, and was released early for health reasons.

A civil war caused my parents to meet each other

After all, the civil war between the right and the left during World War II and after it (1946-1949), was also the reason for my father and my mother getting to know each other and getting married. Specifically, my father was from Trikala in Thessaly and my mother from Sparta, but both were forced to immigrate with their families to

Athens after the war, because life in the countryside was too difficult for leftists. They saw all the jobs being occupied by right-wingers and they were constantly in the discrimination of the (always right-wing) policeman or security police, who liked to terrorize leftists on a daily basis. My mother's father was a construction contractor, as was my father's father, and they had both built houses in their hometowns (Sparti and Trikala), which after the war they sold and came to Athens. Here, my grandfather on my mother's side bought a plot of land and built a house in Kallithea, and my father's father distributed the money to his children and they opened businesses. My father opened a marble business at 80 Alexandra Avenue and later bought a plot of land and built a small marble factory in Nea Filothei. My father met my mother in the house he rented, together with his father and his brother, in Kallithea, because this house was the house that my grandfather, my mother's father, had built, and a part of it was renting. Although my grandfather Philippa's family (my mother's father) was large (two parents and five children), because the money they earned from their jobs was not enough to live on, it was limited to a few rooms in the house and the rest of the ground floor and the basement, was rented.



The back side with the porch, of the house I lived in when I was born. In the top row, second from the left is my grandfather Philippas who built it and to his right is his older son Tasos, on the far right is his younger son Christos. Bottom left my mother, in the center my grandmother Maria and to her right her daughter Tula and far right her daughter Dina. Under the verandah the warehouse that functioned as a kitchen and to the left the door to the rented basement

Before me, my parents had given birth to my brother, and they raised him in my grandfather's house in Kallithea. After my own birth, we moved to Chalandri, to Katina's house. The move happened a few months after I was born and, because of that, I don't remember my childhood in Kallithea at all.



My grandmother, my mother's mother, with my brother around 1955 in Kallithea. In depth you can see the house I stayed in when I was born

Chalandri 1960, my first images from life

My earliest memories are from Chalandri in the 1960s, where my father had become a partner in a marble processing and trading business and had rented a house near its marble factory. The factory was called "Acropolis" and was located near the present-day bus station of the same name in Chalandri. My first memories are the noise of the splitter (crate) that cut volumes of marble and worked even at night. Because our house was close, this noise, especially at night, was noticeable. It must have been the same era (early 60's) when my father

fell asleep smoking and burned with his cigarette a spot on the couch that was turned to bed, where he slept with my mother. My mother never smoked and sure, my father smoking in bed would have bothered her, but in those days women's opinion counted for almost nothing against a man's opinion and the wife also functioned as her husband's servant.



In Chalandri, with my mother and my fighter uncle and godfather Meltos, in the decade of 1950.

Certainly, however, there were frictions from then on between my father and my mother, because my mother must have blamed him in some phases when he was not present, which I remember, because at one point I had a fight, at the age of four or five, with my father and I cursed him too, in order not to curse him again, he picked me up upside down (feet up and head down). I then, in order to "get revenge" on him for lifting me upside down in the air, I revealed to him that he was bad not only for me but also for my mother, as I had heard her say. This cost my mother a "severe rebuke" from my father and ended my own punishment. I remember at the end I was in my mother's arms, while she was wrangling with my father.



Some Easter in Chalandri in the mid-1950s. In the background, with the baby in the white coat in her arms, my mother. The baby is me. Next to her is my father holding my brother's hand. Next to my brother, my grandfather Ilias. To the left of my father is Dina, my mother's little sister

Collector of bottle caps, cigarette boxes' tops and chewing gums' and chocolates' cards

Another thing I remember from the early 1960s is that in the house we were renting at the time, near the "Acropolis" factory, the son of the landlady collected metal caps of soft drinks and alcoholic drinks. At the time, all the kids used to collect such things and you could see in the taverns with a courtyard the kids collecting the caps from the yard, which the waiters threw on the ground when they opened the bottles for the customers. But what impressed me about the landlady's son, is that he used to pound these caps with a hammer and make them flat, and therefore more beautiful, and he had many hundreds of them. This made me, when I was four or five years old, consider him a happy person!

And the kids back then were not collecting only bottle caps. We also collected the tops of cigarette boxes, which were then sold in flat boxes. From these we removed the top part that had the cigarette brand and was always colored. We found these boxes, when they were already empty, thrown in the courtyards of the taverns and on the streets. In short, the time when we were small, in the early

60s, when we went out with our parents, but also when we played in the streets and in the undeveloped plots near our house, we were constantly in search of nice things for us, that the adults didn't need and threw away on the streets or in the yards.

In addition to the caps and the papers from cigarette boxes that we collected without buying, we also collected other small items that we bought, such as clay balls and glass balls. We used to play a game with the clay or glass balls which allowed us to increase them by winning them from other children. In particular, we found a wall, outside or inside the house, and from the same distance from this wall each of us threw his ball at the wall (when we played with clay balls, we did not use glass ones), trying the ball, after hitting the wall, to stop while returning as close to the wall as possible. Whoever managed to get this way his ball closest to the wall won all the balls of the others who were further away.

Another thing we collected back then, the little ones, even when we were older and in the last grades of elementary school, were the "small cards". The small cards were hard, almost square or slightly oblong, pieces of paper, which had colored pictures on them and were sold wrapped in a gum or chocolate wafer wrapper. I had also seen machines, next to kiosks, in which you put a small coin (i.e., half a drachma), you turned a lever and a ball-shaped gum and a piece of paper with the image of a historical figure fell into a special position of the machine, the figure of a person of art or politics (military men etc.). On the back of the picture card was written the biography of the personality depicted on the front. This set of cards was called "The Great Men of the World." From this time, I have a scrap album of "Heroes of 1821" left, containing all but one of the series. It was rumored at the time that anyone who completed the series by sticking the pieces of paper in the album (taken from the kiosk) would receive a soccer ball. But one piece of paper was always missing and that's why the series was not completed.

Hide and seek, chase, stuck-a-man and football

In addition to collecting caps, papers from cigarette boxes, clay and glass small balls and "cards", we played various team games such as chase, hide and seek and stuck-a-man. Children at that time, mainly boys, played in the unbuilt and unfenced plots and in the non-central streets, where few cars passed. The luckiest ones, those who found a suitable plot of land, a sufficient number of players and a ball, also played football. I also played, a few times, on a plot of land in my neighborhood in Chalandri, on which now apartment buildings have been built long time ago.

We did not stay many years in the house near the "Acropolis" factory. Maybe because my father built his own factory in Nea Filothei and left the company. But we didn't leave Chalandri. We went to another house, in Skordili, near the central square, and then to another one on Vasileos Georgiou B Street. Skordilis must have been an argumentative type, because I had heard that at some point he wanted to beat my father. I don't remember why. Maybe because my crying bothered him, because I was a baby then. We must have been staying at Vasileos Georgiou's house, when at some point, when I had a fight with my brother who was two years older, I threw a board at his head from above, from the veranda of the first floor of the two-story house where we lived. I don't remember harming him, but I do remember making him cry. At that time my spontaneity made me pick fights with physically stronger people, something I avoided when I grew up.

An external staircase was leading to this terrace. I shall never forget this staircase, for one day as I was going up I fell and hit my head on the edge of a step, cutting myself above my eyebrow. When I finally reached the porch and entered the house, my mother scolded me for my carelessness, but she put cotton wool and oxygen on the wound. Later they put a band-aid on me which I kept on for a long time. But because they didn't take me to a doctor to stitch me up, I was left with a scar. I remember this staircase for another reason: On the ground floor, under our own house, there lived a little girl, who was very fond of me and I loved her too. I played with her a lot, and I must have been playing with her the day I cut my eyebrow on the step, for I remember her coming up the stairs with me, to see what would become of my eyebrow which was bleeding. Many years later, I think at some book fair, a woman told me that she knew me because we were neighbors at Vasileos Georgiou's house, but I couldn't recognize her after so many decades.

Feasting and roasting lambs with the neighbors and a "stranger who came in the night in the wrong house"

From this house I especially remember the yard. In it there was also another house, on the ground floor, where George Drakos, lived with his wife Mrs. Popi and their daughter Tasia, who later became engaged to "Antonakis". In this house on some holidays there was a big feast. I remember a lot of people would gather and put 45 rpm records on a record player and dance. They danced, from what I remember, folk dances, such as the butcher's dance, folk dances, such as the syrtos, the kalamatianos and the tsamikos, and European ones, such as the tango and the waltz. In addition to my father, my mother also danced all these dances, something in which neither I nor my brother resembled her. We never learned to dance these dances.

In this yard there were peanut trees, whose peanuts were collected by the owner's relatives. The owner, Mr. Tsamoutalis, will be unforgettable to me, if for no other

Reason but because his leg had been amputated and he was walking with a crutch. I think they cut it off because he had diabetes and was at risk of gangrene.

One Easter, in this yard, the neighbors decided to roast their lambs together. My grandfather Elias, my father's father, was still alive then, so it must have been 1960 or '61 or '62. Because of turning the lamb, my father at that stage had a cold in his right (or left?) shoulder, which took about six months to heal. I remember that, to get well, he wore a gold-plated bracelet on his arm, which was supposed to have healing properties.



Easter of 1961 or 1962 in the yard of Vasileos Georgiou street house. In the photo you can see from left to right my mother standing, my grandfather Ilias in the armchair with me on his lap, in front of the man with the hat George Drakos, next to the man with the hat Simos with a glass in his hand, next to Simos the Theoharis, then an unknown person and next to him uncle Meltos, third after my uncle to the right my father with the hat and waistcoat, in front of my father's feet my brother and on the grass, exactly in front of the table, from left to right Tasia, Antonakis and their child



Another photo from Easter in the yard of Vasileos Georgiou street house. From left to right George Drakos, my mother standing and my brother sitting in front of her, next to my mother Mrs. Popi (Drakos' wife), in front of her feet I, beyond Tasia with Antonakis and further right, in the foreground my father turning the lamb

Another thing I will never forget from this house is that one night, while we were sleeping, someone came in and my father attacked him thinking he was a thief. We later learned that it was a son of the owner, who was a sailor and had been away for some time. He lived in this house before we rented it, when his family still lived there. Therefore he had keys, and, not knowing that his people were gone, entered the house like a gentleman one night. At least that's what my parents told me.

To the cinema with my grandfather to see "the people's child"

On the opposite side of the street from this house, a little higher or lower, there was the "Athina" cinema. It was both a winter and a summer cinema. In other words, there was a place for a screen on the roof and in the summer they put a screen and chairs. At that time, Chalandri had over ten cinemas and we used to go at the cinema as a family, at least once a week. I still remember the stragalia-

peanuts-passatembo-chips that they sold, mainly kids, inside the cinema during intermissions. They put them on boards that hung in front of their chests and turned in the aisle between the chairs. They also sold ice creams and sweets in the cinema bar, of which I remember cokes and samali.

Years later, after we had already left this house, I went with my grandfather Philippas to this cinema, in the winter, and we saw the three-hour film "Uprooted Generation". It was a tear-jerking film about the Asia Minor Catastrophe and starring Nikos Xanthopoulos. He used to act in tear-jerking films about the sufferings of the people, which were so popular with the people that he was honored with the title "the people's child". There was a lot of people. At that time all the films were very crowded and not only the tearjerkers that were aimed at the lower popular strata, the "people". I remember that if you went to the cinema, after the movie started, you could not find a place to sit and you had to wait for a long time standing, until a seat became free. The place was empty because many people had not come since the beginning of the screening, but had stayed from the previous screening. The screenings started in the winter from four in the afternoon and ended at twelve midnight.

The densely populated old detached house in Dourou Square

From that house we moved to a large house with basements and a former laundry room ("laundry" as it was officially called) near the second central square of Chalandri (Douros square). In this I spent the years of my student life as a primary school student and then as a student of the six grades' high school. This house had two basements, one in the front and one in the back. The back faced a small courtyard. Families with children lived in these basements, something that does not happen today, neither in this house (which is preserved), nor in Chalandri, as far as I know. On the roof of the building there was an apartment of two small rooms which must have resulted from the conversion of a space, which was used in the past as a laundry room by the maids of the house. This kind of space used to be called laundries, as most people called it. And in this small apartment lived a family, and indeed a large one. This family came to move in when we had already rented the main house. I remember it, because the little girl in the family who was a little younger than me, i.e. 7 or eight years old at the time, I met her when on the unbuilt plot opposite our house, where I had built a small, let's say, house for kittens, she came and demolished it. I had then asked her where she appeared from and she told me that she lived in the same house as me. I hung out with this girl quite a bit when I was little, and my brother hung out with her brother who was four years his senior.

This large building had a fence around it, so the children of the building could play in the yard or in the corridors created by the fence around the building, without going out into the street. The street was central and had a lot of traffic, even a bus passed by. That's why it wasn't made for play, like other roads of that time, mainly dirt roads in the districts and suburbs, where children could play since only a few cars passed by them per hour. In the summer we played until eight in the evening in the common areas of the building and gathered in our houses only after it got dark. At that time, summer time had not yet been established, so in the summer it was evening at eight o'clock.



The main fenced corridor of the building in Douro Square, where I used to play in my childhood. In the photo my brother after some official event. To the left basement windows

The Missile Crisis of 1962, The "Juliana" of 1965 and other memories of the political life of the country before the 1967 dictatorship

Something I vividly remember from one summer when I was playing with the other children in the common areas of the building, is a commotion that was created when a vehicle stopped in front of the house, and a man was lifted out of it and taken to the back basement of the house. I didn't ask and I didn't learn then what had happened, but later I learned that this man was a fighter of the democratic movement of the time who was reacting with demonstrations to the overthrow of the elected democratic prime minister George Papandreu by the king of the country, who was also the supreme ruler and regulator of the state. The fighter was

as I learned when I met him later, Spyros Provatas, and they had brought him crippled from been beaten a lot during the demonstration where the student Sotiris Petroulas was killed by the police. It was July 1965.

Three years earlier than that year, I remember my father going through days of anxiety because he was afraid that there would be a world war and that atomic bombs would fall, from which it would be difficult for anyone to escape. At the time, being young, I could not understand the magnitude of the danger that was hanging over our heads. Much later I learned that those days were the days when the so-called "missile crisis" peaked. It was then that Fidel Castro's guerrillas had prevailed in Cuba and Castro had accepted in Cuba Russian missiles with nuclear warheads aimed at the United States. The president of the USA John Kennedy had demanded that Russia withdraw the missiles, if he did not want war to break out between the then USSR and the U.S. Eventually Russia withdrew the missiles from Cuba and the US withdrew, as I learned much later, the similar missiles they had installed on the territory of Turkey and aimed at Russia.

That decade, the 1960s, was the decade when the nuclear arms race between Russia and America, as we called the two federated states at the time, had reached its peak. The peace movement, which in Greece had as its leader the independent parliamentarian Grigoris Lambrakis, reacted to these measures. Lambrakis was assassinated by a fascist organization and after his death the pacifists, mostly leftists, gathered in an organization called "Democratic Youth Lambrakis". They were the protagonists in the demonstrations that took place in those years, until they were banned by the military dictatorship of 1967. And of course, they were also the protagonists in the "peace marches", which had made Grigoris Lambrakis famous, before the fascist deep state killed him. They took place from Marathon to Athens, about forty-two kilometers, and many people went. Among them a couple of communists, the man was a fellow countryman (from Trikala) of my father and also his comrade in the guerrilla war against the Germans and Italians, who had occupied Greece during World War II. Every time the march took place, this couple, Nikos Athanasiou (whom I heard as Garivaldis from my father, as he was known to his fellow comrades) and his wife Hermione, passed by our house in Chalandri, for a short stop on this long course of 42 kilometers. When the dictatorship of 1967-1974 took place, this couple, who in the meantime had a child, found themselves in exile, on the uninhabited island of Gyaros in the Cyclades. Of course, at the time, I did not know that this couple were communists. Communist status, even if known to the police, was kept from the public as much as possible, as was Jewish status in Nazi Europe during World War II. Communist meant something dangerous for the majority of Greeks, because the Communist Party of Greece was banned and to act as a communist was like you were causing yourself to be prosecuted by the police.

Even the friends of the communists were in danger from the police, because they were considered friends of the enemies of the state and specifically of the country, religion and family. For these reasons my father, although a leftist, former fighter of the E.L.A.S. (Greek People's Liberation Army) during the war and brother of a communist who had spent several years in prison as a political prisoner, he always hid his political position and spread the word that he was a voter of Konstantinos Karamanlis (the old one). That's what we his children thought when we were little.

In the kindergarten with the kindergarten teacher the sister of the protest of the "Iulians"

I must have lived in the house I mentioned earlier, in the second central square of Chalandri (Douros square), when I first went to kindergarten. I went to the Nestoridis School kindergarten, which was private and had both a primary school and a high school (six-grade). I think there were no public kindergartens then. Although I don't have bad memories of the other children in the kindergarten, I must not have felt comfortable among them, because from the very first day I complained to the kindergarten teacher that they don't treat me well, and that's why the school is not a good thing, like she had assured us, from the first moment she welcomed us. Then I experienced the first big disappointment from school life, when the kindergarten teacher's response to my objections was that I should forget what I knew, because there was a school there and therefore I would not have the comfort that I had at home. However, I have no bad memories of this kindergarten teacher. I continued to see her after kindergarten because, sometimes, the school bus that was supposed to take the children of this private elementary school home (elementary school, where I continued, after kindergarten), did not go to my house, and I used to go to my house in the car of the kindergarten teacher's husband, who was picking up the kindergarten teacher and they were going to their house. By diabolical coincidence, this kindergarten teacher was the sister of the fighter I mentioned earlier who got "the bear's beating" on the day they killed Petroulas, Spyros Provatas, and in the back basement of the building where our house was, in Douro Square, her parents lived. That is why Spyros was transferred to this house, after the events of the day when Petroulas was killed. The last time I saw her was in 1975, when I was a first-year student at Panteio. Then she also sold books and I remember that I bought from her a series of hardback books from "Anagnostidis" publications, which had something to do with the communist ideas I had at the time, such as Bukharin's "Historical Materialism," Rosenthal-Yudin's "Philosophical Dictionary," Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity," Kautsky's "Origin of Christianity," Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit," and perhaps others that I do not remember their titles. I read what I mentioned and that's why I remember them.



On the left, my kindergarten teacher at the school in Chalandri, with my brother in the back row, right next to her

Gymnastics demonstrations at the historic stadium of Panathinaikos on the avenue Alexandra

After kindergarten, I continued, as I said, in the elementary school of the Nestoridis School. Fortunately, I went to a private elementary school, as I have written in my article about public education in Greece, because I don't know anyone from my neighborhood who went to a public elementary school and then went to university. I must have been in the first grades of elementary school when my school held its end-of-the-school year gymnastics demonstrations (back then every school year in private and public schools ended with gymnastics demonstrations) at the football field of the Panathinaikos Athletic Club (P.A.O. .), on Alexandra Avenue. So, I remember this stadium from its pitch and not from its stands. I think that this was the first and last time I went to this stadium.



Gymnastic demonstrations of the elementary school of the Nestoridis School somewhere in Chalandri. In the middle is my kindergarten teacher Aleka and fifth from the right my brother

I knew Alexandras Avenue, where my father had a shop that sold marbles in the 1950s, before I knew the Panathinaikos stadium. I knew it because my uncle and godfather Meltos (Miltiadis), the communist ex-political prisoner, lived there in the early 60s, together with his father and my grandfather, until my grandfather died in 1963. From the apartment where my uncle lived with my grandfather, what had made the most impression on me then, when I was six or seven years old, was a voluminous dictionary with beautiful drawings. It was the 'Petit Larousse', a masterpiece of typographic art.



My grandfather Ilias with my uncle Meltos, in a tavern in Athens.

My love of books, writing with pen and ink, blue aprons and the girls

From such a young age I was a lover of books, which, for better or worse, played a big role in my life. Specifically, I remember that my uncle and my godfather, at some name celebration of my brother, or me, at the time when we were in the first grades of primary school, had brought us the children's encyclopedia of Antigone Metaxas, which consisted of two volumes, as a gift. He gave the first to my brother and the second to me. At that time, I had loved this relatively bulky volume with beautiful drawings so much that I put it under my pillow when I slept, and one day I even took it with me to Chalandri's Square, where I had gone with my parents. My parents often went, especially on summer evenings, to the "Kanaris" cafe in the square, where they met their friends.

In the elementary school of the Nestorides School, which, when I frequented it, was housed in a house with a garden in Chalandri and then in another large house with a garden in Paleo Psychiko, the foundations of my education were laid. In each class there were always less than twenty children, so the woman teacher (I never had a man teacher in all six years of elementary school) could monitor the weaknesses of the students and suggest ways to overcome them. In this elementary school I learned to write with calligraphic letters, which I unfortunately forgot, because no one asked me to at the public high school that I frequented after elementary school. In fact, I had also learned to write with a pen that I dipped into an inkwell and, after each word I wrote, I put a pad on it to collect the excess ink. What bothered me when I wrote with a pen and inkwell was that the ink soaked the paper and the letters all around made spikes. Today I attribute this to the excessive, for such a writing method, thinness of the pages of the notebooks.

In general, I was an excellent student, which in this school was rewarded, at least in the first grades, with a badge stitched on the blue apron worn by the little children, every day the teacher gave a "perfect ten" to the work we had done at home. I don't remember until what grade I wore a blue apron. However, girls wore blue aprons throughout elementary school and then through the sixth form high school, at least in public elementary and middle schools, until 1974 when I finished the sixth form high school. I haven't looked to see whose idea it was for the blue aprons, which characterized the Greek education system until the 1970s, but I assume that they were intended for two things, at least: The first was to get the children used to the uniform in general, which is something that it makes you feel like a member of a flock that obeys the orders of the respective shepherd, i.e. the teacher, the officer, etc. And the second was the fight against female coquetry, which girls would develop if they did not feel like members of an army, where interest in the opposite sex is considered something bad and abnormal. At the same time, in indirect ways, already

from elementary school, boys and girls had adopted the roles for which the state intended them: Girls played with dolls, which familiarized them with their future role as mothers, and boys with fake weapons, which familiarized them with their future role of the soldier. The girls, always separated from the boys at the desks, even the group games they played were "girly", such as the game "maids", while the boys were "boyish", such as football, chase and stuck-a-man. Nevertheless, the separation was not complete, because there were group games played by both sexes, such as hide and seek. And, as is still the case today, elementary school children were already indoctrinated by their family and friends with the notion that boys are a superior species to girls, and that they should behave violently and despise boys who are not violent. These latter are considered, even today, to look like girls and are therefore considered worthy of contempt and humiliation.

The first beatings from a classmate

I don't remember playing with girls in elementary school during recess either. Apart from a game, the "apples", which became the reason for a girl classmate of mine to quarrel with me and then her two years older brother to attack me and push me against a wall to beat me. He and another one, also older than me, used violence against me during my childhood years in primary school. And when I finished elementary school, I dreamed that I would take revenge on them when I grew up. Of course, then we got lost and I didn't make it. Not that if we didn't lose, I'd have the power to take revenge on them for their cowardice in inflicting violence on the younger students. Although the presence of violence in the relationships between the boys was not pronounced, the presence of the imposition of the stronger was always evident. I hardly accepted the role of the weakest and that is why I fought with stronger people when they wanted to impose themselves on me. I distinctly remember that at school in Psychiko, at some point I had a fight with a child who was playing on the swing and never said to get off the swing, so that I could use it too. Our argument ended up with the teacher, and the teacher, not only took the side of my opponent, but later told my parents that I am an unruly child and don't let others have a swing. Already from that time I got a taste of how the authorities are unjust by presenting the victim as a perpetrator.

Girls as sex objects and a romantic story

On the other hand, attraction between the two sexes, although forbidden, does not mean that it did not exist. It simply ended in vulgarity, like everything that, because of prohibitions, leads to perversions as substitutes. In particular I remember one

time when the boys, having found a girl who they thought was not in a position to react violently, nor in a position to denounce the injustice against her to the teacher, so that she, the victim, would not be considered responsible, they had climbed the wall of the school's outdoor toilet, the which did not join its roof and left a gap. From this gap they watched the girl I mentioned earlier pull down her panties to pee, until she gave up and ran out of the bathroom in fear. And at some other stage, on the school bus that "distributed" us to our homes after school, the son of a teacher, Mrs. "Sia", who I had in the "second" grade, asked a mentally retarded girl (like they said then) to pull down her pants. And she was taking it down, which annoyed me, and so I had resorted to the driver, asking him to intervene. But in vain, because the driver had no desire to protect the unfortunate girl.

And yet, the culture of separating boys and girls, and despising boys towards girls, has not always been successful. At least, as far as I'm concerned. I distinctly remember that, when I was in the fifth grade of elementary school, the children of another closed private school were transferred to our school. This resulted in almost doubling the number of children in each class. I, in this "overcrowding" by school standards, found myself at the same desk with a girl, and not with a boy, as was the case in previous years. And this girl, who had the courage to break the rules and sit with a boy, had shown me real sympathy. In short, she didn't fight with me, as was usually the case between girls and boys, because the boys wanted to humiliate the girls. Maybe because I didn't want to humiliate the girls. Anyway, for a whole year we sat at the same desk and during the lesson, as much as we could, we talked in whispers or played some of the games that are played in writing, such as "hangman" and "heifers". In fact, at one point, we were both so happy that we started rocking the desk back and forth, a desk that had a built-in seat and desk, until we fell with the desk backwards. I will never forget every morning when I entered the classroom, where the girl had already arrived and upon seeing me, she called my name with joy. I also went and sat fascinated by her. Unfortunately, the "romance" only lasted a year. The following year, the children from the other school left ours. And with the passage of time, I also forgot the name of this girl, who had so beautified my childhood.

The "cold war" at school, the games in the stream with skulls and a broken finger

Something also worth mentioning from my elementary school life is that whether we wanted it or not, although children, in sixth grade we were influenced by the

cold war climate of the time and we supported one of the two adversaries, i.e. the United States of America or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which for convenience were then referred to as America and Russia, respectively, as I said above. In the sixth grade there were four boys, me, Panos Mitsas, Giorgos Tzenevrakis and Kostas Androvitsaneas. The three of us, me, Panos and Giorgos, supported Russia and Kostas supported America, since his father was a military man. The three of us argued that Russia is more powerful militarily than America, and Kostas argued the opposite. As children growing up in Greece in the 60s, all that mattered to us was power and our favorite drawings were warships. During the lesson, I drew warships with a Russian flag and Androvitsaneas with an American one. Although, when I was in elementary school, we had a democracy, the choice of Russia for support was enough to worry a teacher in a country like Greece, where the pro-Russians were on the left. And leftists were considered a danger. That's why one time, the Russian-flagged ships I was drawing caused the teacher to yell at me at recess and tell me not to draw Russian flags on ships again, because I'd get in trouble. Perhaps the teacher was afraid that she would be accused as a leftist by Kostas' father, because she allowed Russian flags. And she didn't want that, because, as I found out later, she herself was a leftist and therefore an easy target in a complaint by an army officer parent, that she was indulging in pro-Soviet propaganda towards her students.

Despite our "political" differences, I also played with Kostas outside of school. He would come to my house in Dourou Square and we would play in the corridors around the building, or, if it rained, we would play cards or balls inside the house. Sometimes we would go to a nearby stream that had little water and slide down its steep banks. In one such phase, Kostas ended up falling into the stream bed from above and probably broke his finger. He had gotten so scared that he kept asking us, me and a friend of my brother's who were playing together, if he was going to die! This friend, Stavros, had accompanied the injured man to his home. I'll never forget a tripping I put on Kostas as he ran down one of the corridors that surrounded the building of my house. He fell down and I laughed. He had asked me curiously why I did it and I didn't know what to answer him. I still haven't forgiven myself for that cheerfulness I showed then.

Otherwise, I used to go to the stream with my brother and his two friends, Mimi and Stavros, now and then. Mimi, I remember, had once made a sled out of palm branches and we made a slide with it. Sometimes we also played sword fighting with reed swords that we made from the reeds of the stream. With such a rod, I remember, Mimi had once lifted a human skull from the bed of the stream. We were afraid to get our hands on it. Back then you would find human bones in the river bed. It was leaked that they came from an old cemetery, which it existed next

to the church of Agios Nikolaos, in the central square, which had been excavated and emptied of its contents. And this content had been thrown into the stream. This stream with minimal, like a brook, water, once had so much water that it overflowed and flooded a small nursing home that existed on its banks. I think the flood also had victims.



In the courtyard of the Nestoridou School, in Paleo Psychiko, when I was in the sixth grade, in 1968. Second from the right, back row, me and George to my left, Panos next to him and Kostas in the corner to the left. In the middle is Mrs. Sula, my first grade teacher. In front, on the far right, Sissy, and on the far left, Giorgia, whose brother had cornered me to beat me in the same yard, behind the plant on the left. Next to her is Vagelio, and next to her is Miriam with braids. Behind Miriam on the right is Anna Paouri and next to her on the right is Lebesi, I think. Far right in front is Eleni.

I still didn't know how children are born!

A teacher who spoke to children about the value of learning

The teacher I mentioned earlier that I had in fifth and sixth grade, Mrs. Kafetzi, as we called her then, although her patronymic was Psariadou, as it was written on my elementary school diploma, she was an excellent teacher. Not only did she succeed in making us learn the subject matter, but she very often devoted a part of the class time to explaining the value of learning to us, in order to make us appreciate it and love it. From then on, I valued education and devoted a lot of

time to it throughout the rest of my life. This teacher, whom I was lucky enough to have as a teacher in the last two grades of elementary school, wanted her students to love knowledge and therefore she was not limited to simply teaching the lessons but explained to us why these lessons should be learned. Something that is usually done today with the prefaces of American university textbooks, where the reasons why it is worth dealing with the sciences, with which they are dealt with, are mentioned. The only thing I didn't like about this teacher was that while with us boys she was strict and demanded that we pay attention during the class time and tested us often, with the girls she was not as strict. I remember, characteristically, that some girls drew girls' heads during the lesson, without the teacher telling them anything, and also when she asked the girls to be examined and they refused, the teacher did not insist and did not make a fuss. But with the boys she did, as she did with Kostas, when she was finding him unprepared.

Excursions by coach

With this teacher and her husband, once happened to be on the same bus that my family and other families used to go on an excursion. This was before 1966 when my father bought a car. I was impressed by this fact, because in my childish eyes, a teacher was too high to sympathize with ordinary people, such as those who went on bus trips. Coach tours at that time were in great demand, because few could afford a car. And on these excursions, whether they took place on beaches in Attica, such as Loutsa and Porto Rafti, for the purpose of sea bathing, or they took place in picturesque villages, such as Arachova and Agoriani, there was a lot of fun, because the excursionists made a big company and ate and drank together in the same tavern. And after the food and drink there was singing, sometimes accompanied by street musicians. I distinctly remember in Arachova (or was it Agoriani?) two itinerant musicians, one of whom was extremely tall, had a long mustache and played a huge drum. And, since these excursions were some of the most beautiful moments of the excursionists' lives, many also took pictures. Such photographs are the best evidence of the sociability that characterized the inhabitants of this country, at that time. And yet it was a time full of hatred and passions, because the prisons and asylums were still full of leftist prisoners, police terrorism against leftists was ever present, the social hierarchy was more than noticeable and the struggle for survival was so hard that can be described by the slogan: Your death is my life. However, people kept all this to themselves and did not discuss it publicly. And they tried to deal with their problems with humor. Therefore, that era, namely the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, was the "golden age" of Greek cinema and especially comedic cinema. It was the time when people laughed at their own crap instead of crying.



On a beach in Attica, from a coach excursion. On the right is Mrs. Popi and next to her the my mother. In front of Mrs. Popi, me on the left and my brother on the right.



To another beach in Attica, where we went by bus. My father can be seen on the left with the black glasses, back and upright with the black glasses my mother and me next to her, on the right lying my brother and, behind him, Simos.

First contact with death and a drowned swimmer!

It was on one of these excursions that I first came into contact with the reality of sudden death. I remember that the bus had stopped temporarily at some country tavern, for people to relieve themselves, and, just before we left, it was learned that one of the excursionists had gone down a slope beside the road, perhaps to relieve himself "romantically", and he had fainted and that's why they had called an ambulance from the tavern's phone. By the time the ambulance arrived it was being said that the man had died. He was accompanied by his wife, who was the only one who accompanied her husband to the hospital where he was taken. I think this incident happened while the bus was going to Agoriani. However, the excursion continued. It left me with the memory of how suddenly a man can die when he is old. Of course, the one who died, as I recall now, was not old but middle-aged. To my eyes, though, he was old then.



In a tavern in Agoriani. George Drakos in front on the right with the davul and behind him the davul man with the mustache. Behind on the left of Drakos is my father. Far left is my mother and in front of her my brother and next to him me. In the background left, below the window, Simos with black glasses

And how much I don't remember from these trips... My childhood was full of them. In fact, the excursionists, the majority of whom knew each other, for Chalandri of the

50s and 60s was much smaller than it is today, they had built a club that only dealt with coach tours. They had built the "Periegetic Union of Chalandri", which was known as "Perigitiki". And I remember, that sometimes, some of its members and the excursionists in general, met and had fun outside of excursions. I still think of some of the more regular excursionists, such as Menelaus Kaloumenos with his daughter Iphigenia, Diouvouniotis, our neighbor Drakos with his wife Poppi and his daughter Tasia, Theocharis, who usually was wearing a trilby and black glasses, Simos and his wife, Laskaris, who ate at least one plate of spaghetti, before any other plate. Theocharis was drowned on one of these swimming excursions. I think in Agia Marina, which as I had heard had whirlpools and that is how was explained the fact that his body was not found . Years later, I found myself with his son, with whom I used to play on bus trips as a child, to be fellow students at Panteio university and even to be on the drafting committee of the charter of the student association of Panteio, which was formed after the dictatorship , in place of the old one controlled by the dictatorship.

My mother's friends, the houses with courtyards and wine barrels and a house which had become a tavern

Our old neighbor George Drakos, a blacksmith by trade, was a very good man and a great friend of my father. With his help, my mother's little brother opened a shop selling irons in Halandri and became rich. But also his wife, Mrs. Popi, was a good friend of my mother. I always remember her thick with black glasses, a characteristic, I would say, figure of the 60s, when the women of the popular strata were distinguished by their thickness. She would come to our house, even after we had ceased to be neighbors. Also, my mother used to pick me up and we used to go to her place as well. As we also went to the house of "Simaina", namely Simos's wife. Somos was a nurse at the People's Hospital and once told my brother, who was in primary school at the time, to become a gynecologist. My brother eventually became a doctor but not a gynecologist. We even went with my mother to the house of "Simaina's" mother, which was old, had a large garden and a large vine, under which we sat. Simos's house, which I mentioned earlier, was an elevated one storey house with a yard and flowers, a typical bourgeois house of the 60s. Few of them survive today, because their place has been taken by apartment buildings.

In addition to these beautiful houses, in Chalandri there were also some complexes of ground-floor houses with a common courtyard. My mother's friend, Mrs. Martha, who had two sons and a daughter, lived in one of these. Her eldest son, who had made an impression on me because his mother would put him to eat a mountain of spaghetti, went to be a soldier during the dictatorship and in the

army he breathed his last. His parents were told that he died of an illness, but they were not allowed to see the body, if I remember correctly, and after the dictatorship I heard that his parents suspected that he had died a violent death. From Mrs. Martha's daughter, Litsa, at some point I had taken a pack of high school books and in exchange I had given her a small basket, one of those with which the children, at that time, took snacks from home to school. I never read those books. After all, when I got them, I was still in the first grades of primary school. But I was a lover of books and that's why this exchange seemed very beneficial to me.

In the common inner yard, where was Mrs. Martha's house, was also a tavern, where my parents and I often went, the Captain's tavern. I never found out if "Captain" was his last name or a nickname from his time in the military. Besides, I don't remember this tavern having a sign. In essence it was a house too, like Mrs. Martha's house, part of which had been turned into a tavern so that the family that lived in the house (the Captain's family) could have some income, because the times then were really difficult for many Greeks. What I remember of the Captain was that he had a big belly and wore a white woolen flannel. He must have been drinking too much. I do not remember, however, whether the common yard I mentioned earlier had barrels of wine. However, I remember two other such yards surrounded by houses, where there were large barrels of wine and my father would send me with a demijohn to buy wine, retsina in particular, because that was what you could find in bulk in Chalandri back then. One of the improvised wine sellers who had such barrels was Miligos. Much later I learned that the Miligoi were an old Slavic tribe, who had settled, like the Ezerites, in Mani, as early as 8th century after Christ, when the entire Greek area was overrun by Slavs, who settled permanently in Greece and were Christianized and Hellenized by force.

In another inner courtyard, where there were also barrels and I bought bulk retsina wine, there was also the house of a friendly couple of my mother and father, Coralia and Dionysakis. Coralia sometime, seeing me during a visit with my mother looking through the few books in the house, of which I only remember "Crime and Punishment" (because I was impressed by the title), gave me a Bible translated into "New Greek". From it I later read the first "book": Genesis. Dionysakis (Dionysis Anezinis) was a very kind and happy man, who had been separated from his wife for years, but could not get a divorce. Koralia was also separated from her husband, when she fell ill with tuberculosis and was confined to the "Sotiria" hospital-sanatorium. Then her husband had taken their child and went and settled in Marseilles, France. I don't think she was able to get a divorce either, because much later she was getting some small pension from France, probably from her husband who had died.

The taverns of Chalandri

My own family often went out with Dionysakis and Koralia and we went to various taverns in Chalandri. At that time, Chalandri had many taverns, of various categories, namely for the poor and for the rich, and many people went to these taverns. After all, apart from the cinema, there was no other outlet for entertainment than the tavern. There were no televisions in the homes, because television had not yet appeared in Greece. So people preferred to be with their friends in a tavern, where they could get it very cheap (if it was one of the popular taverns) drinking wine (Mediterranean retsina) "xerosfyri", namely without appetizer, or with some very cheap snacks, such as feta cheese or potatoes, rather than staying at home listening to the radio. Whenever we went to a tavern with Dionysakis and Coralia and other family friends, Dionysakis was the master of the group. He always managed to create fun, whether by telling funny stories or singing familiar songs. I remember hearing the "national" song "Evzonaki gorgo" from him for the first time in a tavern:

I'm me, a rapid evzonas
known all over the world,
which dandy, which sugared bun,
can get ahead of me.
One two, one two,
fustanella, tsarouchi, tassel, fez
gloat, valiance, pride,
proper blooming marigold.

Dionysakis knew this song and sang it with the appropriate village accent, so he got a lot of laughs. After all, as I said before, Dionysakis was a happy man, at least on the outside, and creating laughter was his specialty. Dionysakis, this nice man, at some stage was affected by diabetes and had to take insulin injections every day. I remember how disturbed I was at some point by what I saw, when in some tavern on some beach, he got up from the table and went to a corner, where he injected himself alone. I later learned that he had ended up in a nursing home (he had no children), where he died.



In a tavern of Chalandri with Koralia and Dionysakis. At the back table from right to left, George Drakos, Dionysakis (in front of the table), my father with a glass in his hand, my mother, my brother in front of the table, Mrs. Popi beside my mother, Koralia next to her on the left and Tzouganatos family in the left corner of the table

A widow of a Gendarmerie officer killed in the "December's events (1944)", the encyclopedias and the first library at home

From Dionysakis and Koralia, we got to know the Intzirtzoglou family, with whom my own family used to hang out a lot, because our houses were also relatively close when we lived in Dourou Square.



In a tavern of Chalandri. From left to right: John, Maria, my father, my mother, Mrs. Giorgia, Koralia and Dionysakis

This family consisted of the father, Giannis, a clerk, the mother, Mrs. Giorgia, the daughter, Maria, and the grandmother. The grandmother was the widow of a Gendarmerie officer, who had been killed during the siege of the Gendarmerie camp in Makrygiannis, during the "December events", namely the battles that took place in Athens between left-wing rebels on one side and government troops, gendarmes, far-right and English on the other, in December 1944. As the widow of a police officer killed by the communists (in her view), she told her granddaughter Maria that the communists were grabbing the children and drinking their blood (something many Greeks had been saying for the Jews also). Giannis came to our house many evenings to hang out with my father. I remember that, when he rang the bell and we opened the door, he would ask: "Is the so-called one in?". I had been impressed by this word, but only much later I became interested in knowing what it meant. Sometimes had come to our house, alone, and his wife, Mrs. Giorgia, who at that time seemed quite attractive to me. Sometimes her daughter Maria also came to play with me and my brother. But I also often went to their house and played with Maria, who was a little younger than me. With Maria I played the board game (as they called it back then, because it was played on the table) "Griniaris" and every time I went there Mrs. Giorgia and the grandma brought me some sweet to eat. Many times I went to Maria's house, not for Maria, but for the encyclopedias that her father had in a nice bookcase in his bedroom. had the 28-volume Great Greek Encyclopedia and the 18-volume Encyclopedic Dictionary "Helios", which he had managed to buy little by little in weekly issues. I used to go to Maria's house to consult the encyclopedias when I had to prepare some homework when I was in high school, because my father never deigned to get me and my brother a big encyclopedia. The only encyclopedia he had bought for us was the 5 volume "The Treasury of Knowledge", which was for primary school children and not for high school students. And this encyclopedia my father had taken after a lot of pressure from me. Like, also after a lot of pressure from me and my brother, when we were in high school, my father had bought us a bookcase. Until then you didn't see any books in my house other than school books. My father had about a dozen "extracurricular" books, as they were called then, but he kept them in his bedside table, next to his bed, and we had neither access nor interest in them. My mother also had some books in a cabinet. They were unbound books in issues, novels or better "romances", as they were called then, which she had obtained by buying the magazine "Romance" every week, which in the 1950s was released together with a sixteen-page insert of a novel (romance) each time. These issues, later, I went and bound them, like several other books I bound in my life. Reflecting, now in this old age that I am, that I spent my entire childhood without a library at home, I understand that, right from the beginning of my life, I was separated by a handicap

from the children of the upper classes, who grew up in homes with large libraries. After all, there was neither a children's library in the high school nor a public library in Chalandri, even though since then the population of Chalandri was several tens of thousands. There were many taverns and cinemas and churches in Chalandri, but no libraries.



Tavern of Chalandri around 1968. From right to left, Giannis, Mrs. Giorgia, my mother, my father, Maria and her grandmother Mrs. Argiro

Politics before the 1967 dictatorship as I knew it

I don't remember what my father and mother discussed with their friends in coffee shops or taverns, however they did not discuss politics, because political discussions could reveal different political choices and lead to fights. After all, until 1964, there were political prisoners in exile from the time of the civil war, and then, from 1967 to 1974, we had the fascist military dictatorship of the colonels, which once again filled prisons and exile sites with left-wing political prisoners. I, while I was in elementary school, when there were elections, given that before I entered the sixth form high school they were banned due to the dictatorship, I remember my father discussing politics only with our relatives. Specifically, I remember that in some elections in which the Center Union came first (i.e. in 1963 or 1964), my father had picked us up and taken us to Petroupolis, to my mother's little sister's house, to listen with her and her husband George, the election results on the radio. Rather, he wanted to celebrate with them the rise of the democratic Center Union led by George Papandreu to power, which meant the end of the absolute rule of a right wing, which was involved in a police democracy and an unpunished action of fascist

parastatal groups, whose greatest "accomplishment" was the murder of the independent parliamentarian of the left, Grigoris Lambrakis, in 1963.

Papandreu was elected prime minister twice, namely in 1963 and 1964, but he did not manage to remain in power after July 1965, because, relying on the 53% of the votes he had received in the 1964 elections, he thought he had the power to remove from the army the ability of the latter to intervene in politics. Not only did he not succeed, and the king, as supreme ruler, forced him to resign and never become prime minister again, failing to get a vote of confidence even from all his own MPs to maintain the majority, but also saw in 1967 the army to carry out a military coup and to openly take over the government of the country. It is understood that the supporters of Papandreu, in July 1965 when the king forced him to resign, did not sit idly by but took to the streets and for a month clashed with the police with many injured, even dead, Petroulas. I was 9 years old at the time and I didn't know what was going on. I remember only once when I was returning from Athens with my mother on the bus to Chalandri that we had taken from the starting point of Kanningos, the bus as it was going up from Harilaou Trikoupi was stopped by protesters who were going down Harilaou Trikoupi shouting "Papandreu Papandreu" and knocking the bus with their fists as they walked.

The house I was born in, the gas stove, the ice cooler, the fireplace, the grill and the toilet in the yard

When I was in elementary school, my mother took me with her wherever she went. We were going from Chalandri to Kallithea, where her father's house was, in Athens, the house I lived in when I was born, and she was seeing her mother who still lived there with my mother's younger brother. My grandfather did not live there for reasons I will mention below. I remember that before we arrived at my mother's home, or when we went out for a walk around, we would cross the Ilisos bridge. Ilisos still existed, they had not covered him. The house I lived in when I was born also had a basement, as well as a room in its yard, and the main house was split in two. All of these were rented, and apart from half of the main house (where my father had stayed with his father and his brother and that's how he met my mother), the others had no toilet and were served by a toilet in the garden, which did not have a cistern and you had to pour the water with the bucket. A student of Panteio university lived in the room in the yard. This top school was pretty close to home and that's why I had stamped it from a young age. Of course, I did not know then that a day would come when I would also become its student. The basement of the house also had a warehouse, which my grandmother did not rent. It was full of things that

today we would call it garbage, but at that time, the poor and those with low incomes, threw away almost nothing. My grandmother used to cook there, because the part of the house she lived in did not include the kitchen of the house and the toilet. The part of the house with the kitchen and toilet, at that time, was rented to a Prodromos Karabet, I remember, who gave the rent to my mother, because she had taken it as a dowry when she got married. My father had demanded it in order to marry her and, although this was not fair, because two other sisters of my mother had to be endowed, he succeeded and got it. Boys were not given a dowry, so their wives could get a dowry when they married. My mother had two boy brothers who did not get anything from the father's estate. And yet, after my father's death, we had to sell my mother's dowry to them to pay the inheritance tax. As I said before, my grandmother used to cook in the basement, because there was no tap in her house inside, just like there was no tap in the room in the yard either. There was a communal water tap for everyone in the yard, near the exit of the basement storeroom, in which my grandmother cooked. One had to get water from it, to pour into the communal toilet in the yard or to cook. I remember my grandmother cooking on a primus stove and roasting coffee in a small alcohol stove. The primus stove burned pure kerosene. In the storage room, which my grandmother used as a kitchen, there was also an ice cooler. This cooler had a large ice tray for the ice sold by the ice vendor, who passed by every day. The ice should not have lasted more than a day. And for heating, in the winter, my grandmother used a brazier. I had heard that, before I was born, my mother, who lived with her 4 other siblings in this house, had at some point passed out from the carbon monoxide that came from the coals of the brazier when they burned. I could not imagine then that, even after fifty years, there would be people who out of necessity would use a brazier and die from the fumes, as recently two students and a thirteen-year-old girl from Bulgaria, who lived with her mother in a house without electricity. I also remember that, in my grandmother's main house, there was a water dispenser with a tap. They put water there and with this water they washed in the morning and my uncle who lived with my grandmother also shaved.

The apartment on the street of commercial sex

Another house that my mother used to take me to was in the center of Athens, on Sophocleous Street. At that time, the apartment rents in the Sophocleous street's apartment buildings (which were all old) must have been cheap, because there were grocery stores on their ground floors and the whole area smelled of cheese. Also some of these apartment buildings were hotels for prostitutes, like the pink hotels today. And at the entrances of these hotels you could see prostitutes waiting for customers, those that were not waiting for customers on the street,

namely on Sophocleous Street. I, of course, at that time had no idea why these women had such a sad fate, who after all, from the mess of their appearance, they looked like very tortured women. Even now that I am old, I wonder how at that time there were people who paid those pitiable women, to have commercial sex with them.

But even though the apartments in Sophocleous were cheap in the 60s, as they are even today when there are no prostitutes there, the apartment where my mother's friend Kiki lived, where we used to go, was shared with another. She kept two rooms and he kept two. I was not impressed by this cohabitation. I was fascinated by the light in the stairwell of the apartment building (it had no elevator), which would turn itself off before you could get to the upper floors, leaving you in the dark to fumble for the switch. I had never seen such a light before. Kiki was my mother's closest friend and my mother had met her when she first came from Sparta to Athens in 1946 or 1947. Kiki was the daughter of my mother's landlady, in the house my mother rented with her father and her older brother in Katsipodi (today's Dafni), where she ended up when she came from Sparta. This house did not have running water and to get water one had to go to a communal tap of the municipality in the street. This had made an impression on my mother, because in the private house she lived in Sparta she had running water, while she did not have it at home in the capital of the country. Kiki had a brother in the mental hospital, I think he was called Kostas, who had been in a concentration camp during the war and had also lost an arm. When I met Kiki, her mother had died and the only one who visited her brother was Kiki. Kiki also had a son, who grew up with his aunt, because Kiki had divorced her husband and he, as a lawyer, had managed to take the child from her. From the court for her divorce, Kiki had met a lawyer, whom I happened to meet one day. I remember him because he had lost one of his eyes due to vitriol thrown at him by a jealous girlfriend. Vitriol was used at that time by women for such purposes as well.

The laundress whose child met a tragic death

Another, very poor, house, where my mother had taken me, was the house of Katina the washerwoman, in Halandri. This little woman, short and fat, like most women of the lower class at that time, came once a year, at least, to our house in Dourou Square. There in the back yard, where there was a tap, she heated water in a large cauldron and washed in fluffy blankets, rugs and other such things, which my mother did not have the courage to wash by herself or were too big for the washing machine, which she bought around 1965. Katina used to blame her husband, who drank a lot and neglected his family. He neglected her so much that Katina even lacked clothes for her and her children and that's why my mother gave her everything she could. At that time there were no "free bargains". What had shocked me the most about Katina was one day when she came to our house crying bitterly. She was crying incessantly because she had recently lost her little son, who

was burned while he was sleeping, when the primus stove, which they usually used to keep warm, was knocked over and the oil spilled on the little one's blankets, which caught fire. I was impressed by the death of the little one and I think it was then that I asked my mother if I was going to die too. She had assured me, I remember, that I would not die!

The professions of poor girls: Dressmakers and hairdressers

Another house that my mother used to take me to when I was little was that of her seamstress, Mrs. Flora. It was in Chalandri, on the street that is the starting point of the trolleys, which joints the long street where the weekly street market takes place and also has a big supermarket. This house, a detached house from what I remember, was as we went down to the right, lower than the street level, something like in a gully. At that time, it was cheaper for a woman to have her clothes sewn by a seamstress, than to buy them ready-made (then ready-made was known as: Prêt-à-Porter = Ready to wear). And most poor girls, in order to survive, learned the art of dressmaking or hairdressing. Mrs. Flora, to my eyes at the time, was an elderly woman, but with black hair and a short stature. She was short and thin, but she had a daughter who was tall and quite stout, who had a big "weakness" for me. Every time my mother took me to their house, the daughter, who helped the mother in sewing, would shower me with kisses and tell me that she would like to marry me but I was too young. But she said she would wait until I was older to marry me. I, of course, at that time, although I liked kisses, I did not yet know how children are born! And, most of the time that my mother was doing the fittings with her dressmaker, I was playing alone in the garden and thinking about the big, by my standards, daughter of Mrs. Flora, who wanted to marry me.

Since I talked about the hairdressing profession, it is worth talking about the hairdressing salon that my mother sometimes took me to. This hair salon was in the central square of Chalandri, facing at the right side of the church of Agios

Nikolaos. My mother rarely went to the hairdresser and only went to do the so-called "permanad", namely the permanent hairstyle. This hairstyle curled her hair, but curly hair must have been in fashion for the women of the "folk" because many, to curl it, wrapped it in small plastic rollers known as "bikuti" and slept with the hair wrapped! My mother had done this too, sometimes. In the hair salon you saw women sitting in a row and each one of them she has her head in a big helmet, the so-called hairdryer. They sat there for hours and gossiped. I, of course, was bored in such an environment and that's why I went out to play on the steps of the church. I remember on summer evenings many children played on the steps of the church and some, like me, liked to slide on the parapet of the stairs. At the top of the left parapet, as we look at the front of the church, I once forgot a pack of cards with pictures of war

planes and lost it. This loss had cost me a lot, because the cards were many and I had spent a long time collecting them. I could never replace them.

The festivals, the sketches of the saints, the children selling candles and a girl that her hair caught fire from a candle without realizing it!

And since my mother was a Christian, she usually went to festivals that took place when the saint of a certain church was celebrated. I remember her always holding my hand and that made me feel somewhat safe. Together with my mother, I had been to Vrilissia for the first time, at the festival of Analipsi, as well as at the festival of Agia Varvara, which is located on Kifissias avenue, where a trolley turns for Chalandri. Even in Kifissia "our grace" had arrived but I don't remember the name of the church, although since then I see it often, as I pass by there on the bus. After so many years, the people who frequented the churches at that time seem harmless to me, perhaps because as a child I was totally ignorant. How can I consider the girls of that time dangerous, who before we arrived at the church would pin a small paper sketch of the saint who was celebrating on our lapels, in the hope that we would give them some change, even a half a drachma? How can I consider the itinerants who in front of the church were selling charcoal and incense for the oil lamps of the graves to be dangerous? I remember the characteristic phrase with which they urged us to buy: "May your dead be forgiven." A wish you also heard from the beggars you always found in front of the churches. How should I consider the children and girls who, before we arrived at the church, came to us with large candles and begged us to buy any candles, dangerous? How can I consider the fairgoers with the stalls selling cheap toys for small children dangerous? How can I consider dangerous the people who, because of a celebration, wore their best clothes and together with their children, also dressed formally, went to church, and because not everyone could fit inside during the liturgy, listened to the liturgy through the loudspeakers? And yet, this whole scene, which did not reveal how dirty this whole world was thinking, nor how much money the priests made from such celebrations, was indelibly imprinted on the hearts and minds of the children. And these, when they grew up, they made sure to invoke these stupid traditions as their cultural identity in order to maintain the dominance of the Church in the social and political life of Greece. Though most people do not believe, at least before they reach the brink of death, in life after death, which is the main commodity traded in every religion. Even my father, although he did not believe in the Christian god but in "a higher power", although he did not go to church when they celebrated, as my mother did, every Holy Week he fasted and on Good Friday he went with us to the Epitaph procession. He also took us to the church on Holy Saturday to hear "Christ is Risen", to light the white candles we had bought before with the "Holy light" ("Holy light" was the name given to the fire that the priest lit with his own candle from some candle and with it he lit the candles of the faithful and they the candles of others), and to carry this "Holy light" at home. In some procession of the Epitaph in Chalandri, I remember, during the procession that the people made with lighted yellow candles behind the Epitaph, with my own

lighted candle I had set fire to the hair of the young lady who was walking in front of me. She didn't understand anything, until my mother brushed her hair with her hand. Then the young lady turned around and learned that her hair was burning. The priests call this day off "religious devoutness".

Easter in Trikala, the steam train, the carriage and a friend from the past of the German occupation

However, the Easter holidays, which will always remain unforgettable for me and I will remember them with nostalgia, are the holidays I spent in Trikala, my father's hometown. My father may not have had a house in Trikala, since it had been sold as I said above, but he had some distant relatives and a very good friend of his. This friend of his, Andreas, from what I had heard, had a special respect for my father, because my father with the position he had in the E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. during the war, he had saved Andreas from serious danger from the leftists. We were usually hosted at Andreas' house, when my father took us to Trikala for Easter.

At first we went to Trikala by train, later by my father's car. We usually went by the "speed", as the train that ran on oil (diesel) was called, although we also happened to go by steam train, at least part of the way. We called the steam train "posta" (probably because it used to carry mail bags) and it was slower and produced a lot of smoke. The Athens-Trikala route then seemed long to me and I remember sometimes sleeping at my mother's lap. We used to arrive at Trikala in the evening and right outside the station Andreas was waiting for us with a carriage. Back then there were still carriages that functioned as taxis. And they probably cost less. The coachman sat in front and the five of us sat back. We ended up at Andreas' house, a nice detached house with a garden, where his wife Rosalia, his two daughters, Litsa and Rena, and his son Kostakis were waiting for us. The daughters were older than me and my brother, who were elementary school students at the time. Kostakis was probably about our age. They were very beautiful and good girls and that's why I will never forget their kisses that I received every time I went to Trikala.

At Andreas' house we were accommodated in a room with two beds and a bookcase. My father slept with my brother in one and my mother and I slept in the other. In the library there was the Great Greek Encyclopedia of 28 volumes. I think that's where I first saw it and since then getting it has become an obsession of mine. I had even prayed to God to "send it" to me, but of course he didn't "sent it" to me, and from then on I began to doubt his existence! In the end, I never got it, because when after many years I found the money to buy it, it was already "archaeology".

We usually went to Trikala on Good Friday and that's why we went to the Epitaph procession together with Andreas' family. On Holy Saturday the decorated Epitaph was displayed in the church and the children used to pass under it. This is how I too have passed under Epitaph. On Holy Saturday, before midnight, we went with Andreas' family to the church for the "Resurrection". All with white candles that, after we lit them after "Christ is Risen", we fought to keep them lit until we returned to Andrea's house. There we ate the traditional magirtsas, from which always, it seemed to me, little the quantity they served me.

On Easter day, my father would pick us up and take us to the homes of his various distant relatives, who were all roasting lambs and stuffed lamb intestines in some yard. We would sit a little near the lamb, my father would learn their news and they would learn his, and then we would leave and go to another relative's house. Before we left each house, we were each given a red egg and a bagel. I collected so many eggs that I didn't know what to do with them, while I usually ate the pretzels because they were sweet. At that time, every housewife made pretzels and dyed eggs red for Easter. Some housewives also stuck colored paintings with religious scenes on the eggs, which they called "decals". However, the best Easter pastries were made by Mrs. Rosalia, the wife of my father's friend, who hosted us.

After visiting the houses of the most distant relatives, we ended up in the yard of the house, where my father's aunt Marina was roasting her lamb. She, if I am not mistaken, was the wife of his mother's brother, who had died. Aunt Marina, whom I always remember as an old woman with black clothes and a black scarf, had two grown children, Giannis who was a lawyer and Fotini. In addition to these three, namely Marina and her two children, neighbors also roasted their lambs in Marina's yard on Easter.



Trikala, Easter 1959. From right to left: A neighbor, Marina, my mother sitting with me in her arms, Fotini standing behind her, next to Fotini a neighbor and next to her my brother and next to my brother my father. Next to my father is Giannis (on the far left)

It also happened that at some point, my whole family slept at Marina's house. Marina was a little stingy, like most, as I heard, Thessalians of the time, but her son was not and, because he begged my father to host us in his house, my father once did him the favor, although the house of Aunt Marina was uncomfortable, compared to Andreas' house. I don't remember if there was a toilet in the house (it wasn't common in old country houses), but it certainly there wasn't any running water in the house. To wash in the morning we had to use a traditional water pump with a big handle, known as "tulumba". Washing with a tulumba is nerve-wracking, because if you don't have someone to raise the handle of it for you, the water comes out suddenly every time you lower the handle, and by the time you can scoop up water with both hands, it's spilled into the trough and you have to lower the handle again, which has been raised in the meantime.



Easter in Trikala. Marina turns the lamb and has my mother on the right and Rosalia on the left. Between Rosalia and Marina, from behind, Rena. Behind my mother is my father, to his right is Litsa and in front of my mother to the left I and to the right my brother. On the far left is Andreas

My father's friend Andreas must have been an acquaintance of my father's cousin, the lawyer, because I remember at some point he was also at Marina's house drinking with my father and the lawyer. After they had drunk enough, probably tsipouro, because at that time many people in Thessaly made tsipouro in their homes, Andreas began to sing the "Willow", one of the most beautiful folk songs, and he was moved to tears. It was not the first time that Andreas cried, after he had drunk too much. It is understood that, at that time, it was a shame for a man to cry, and therefore, on that occasion when Andreas cried in the stranger's house, some justification had to be found. And the justification was found: Andreas had cried while singing the "Willow" because Fotini's mother did not accept the marriage proposals made for her daughter and the consequence was that Giannis' sister Fotini had remained unmarried. It goes without saying that Marina was not even informed of what Andreas was doing. Finally, Fotini got married after many years, but after her mother died. By then she was old, so she married an old man. The one she didn't marry in the end, even though he was a lawyer, was her brother.



Easter of 1963 in Trikala in the yard of Marina's house. From left to right, Litsa is standing and I am sitting in front of her, Rena is behind her, Rozalia, her mother, is sitting next to Rena, and in front of Rozalia is my brother, behind Rozalia in the white blouse is Fotini, next to my brother Kostakis, to the right of Fotini her mother Marina and next to Marina Giannis, in front of Giannis my mother and next to my mother Andreas and in front of Andreas my father

A traditional farmhouse with a tap that never stopped running

Another relative's house in which we had been hosted a few times during Easter in Trikala was that of Zoitsa, a cousin of my father's mother, who had married a refugee, Simeon, had adopted a daughter, Maria if I am not mistaken, and he had married her to a very good man, with whom she had three children: Two boys, Makis (Simeon) and Fotis and a girl, Zozo (Zoi). This house was a classic, I would say, farmhouse of that time. It had a large arable area, where they cultivated various fruit trees, and even had animals, which were housed in a stable. It also had plenty of water that came out of the ground with a special installation and was constantly flowing. This type of water, namely the water that continuously comes out of the ground and never ends, is called artesian and is common in Thessaly.

We had a good time every time me and my brother went to that house with our parents because we played with the kids who were around our age and they loved

us a lot. And it goes without saying that we also ate well since, like all the Thessalians, this family used to roast lambs on Easter. The only downside was that the house fields were fertilized with manure and the smell of manure was pervasive. The permanent residents of the house, I suppose, were used to her. But I never got used to it.

The children's father, Christos if I'm not mistaken, had come twice and seen us in Athens. One was accompanied by his son Makis, who succeeded and at the age of 16 went to America to study (and never came back, as far as I remember, to Greece, to avoid the army, I guess), and the other came to plead with my father to intercede, so that a girl who had run away from her home, in Trikala, and was living with her boyfriend in Athens, could return home. My father had a friend, a police officer, who was his "compatriot", namely from Trikala, Pantelis Durogiannos. He asked him to scare the couple and get the girl to return to Trikala. I don't know what happened in the end. I only remember that we had gone to some house in Petroupolis, related to the case, if I am not mistaken, where there had been a great discussion on the subject, and then the girl appeared at our house, where she probably stayed for a night. She had seemed to me quite a pretty and good girl but I did not keep her name.



At Simeon's house in 1973. On the left is my father, next to him is Simeon, behind him is my brother, in the center is Christos turning the lamb, behind him is Fotis, next to him is my mother, next to her is Zozo and to her right is her mother Maria

The bazaar, the Sarakatsani people with their carts and the "bride market"

From Trikala at that time I will never forget the bazaar and the walks up and down the main street. The bazaar was held on Saturday, so that the Jews could not sell, as for them Saturday is a holiday and they should not work (of course I did not know this at the time). The day was chosen hundreds of years ago, at the time when the Orthodox Church was a trustee of the Ottoman Empire, to which the Greek area also belonged. It was a big bazaar and it looked like today's street markets. The products sold were mainly fruit and vegetables. But in this you could see many, mostly women, selling without stalls. They would spread something on the sidewalk and put the few things they had to sell there. And here and there you also saw some animals. But you also saw some carts left somewhere, because there were still farmers who moved by cart, like the Sarakatsanaeans. I remember at one point a long line of carts with Sarakatsani people, in traditional colorful costumes, leaving the city.

Strolling up and down the main street was the evening routine of that time, for the people of Trikala. They made an impression on me, because the street was full of people, as if a demonstration was taking place, and the language I heard them speaking differed in pronunciation from the language spoken at that time in Athens. On the one hand, they cut many vowels from the words, and on the other hand, their pronunciation overemphasized some vowels or consonants. As descendants of Vlachs, the Trikalinians up to that time were influenced by the pronunciation of the Vlach language, which was still spoken in the mountains of Thessaly, such as Pindos. Today, after many decades of banning it from being taught and used in schools, and in general in the citizen's relations with the state, this language is spoken by very few. In Athens, at that time, no one walked the streets to pass the time, because the streets were for cars, nor did they speak that language. I later learned that these walks were an opportunity for them to get out of the house, together with their parents, the unmarried girls, who were not allowed to go out of the house alone, if they did not want to be considered immoral. And they needed to be out on the street a bit, in case some prospective groom saw them and liked them. That's why these walks, I later heard them called "bride market".

A mosque full of garbage and excrement

In Trikala I also saw a mosque for the first time. In fact, I thought for many years that the two buildings I had seen were mosques, while only one was a mosque and the other a mausoleum. These buildings were near the old prisons of Trikala and I had seen them because the house of Marina, my father's aunt, was also nearby. What had impressed me in these buildings, is that while they were so imposing, at

least the mosque, they were full of garbage and excrement. At the time, I assumed that all this filth and abandonment was a consequence of the filth that characterized the Greeks in general. I used to see it in public toilets, where many would defecate outside the hole, when the toilets were "Turkish", namely a hole with places for the feet on the left and right, or they filled the floor with pee and discarded papers. After many years (too many I would say) that I began to recognize that part of the cultural identity of the Neohellenes is a sick and aggressive nationalism, I realized that the garbage and excrement in temples and graves of non-christians were deliberately thrown by the Greeks in order to desecrate these places. Because temples and tombs in any religion are considered sacred places and to defile them is desecration, namely the most extreme insult to the religion they represent. After all, when I first saw a mosque (I hadn't realized that there were mosques in Athens too, that they weren't in use) I didn't know that Thessaly was home to a large Muslim population, which included Turkish speakers and Vlachs and Romas, and that it was gifted by the great powers to the Greek state in 1881, when my grandfather Elias was 4 years old. But my grandfather was not born in Thessaly. He was born in Kerasovo, Epirus, which, like all of Epirus, was wrested by the Greeks from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, when my grandfather was 25 years old. My grandfather Ilias must have seen many abominations caused by religious intolerance and lost all confidence in the words of the priests, who were always the protagonists of these abominations. That's how I explain why he didn't believe in any afterlife and said that when he died, he didn't care if his body was thrown into a ditch.

Searching for the bones of my grandmother, who died in shelter, after the shelter was hit by a bomb

The last time I went with my father to Trikala was in 1974 when I accompanied him to vote in the first elections held in Greece, after the seven-year military dictatorship. We didn't stay at Andreas' or relatives but in a hotel. I remember going with my father to the cemetery of Trikala, where my father hoped to find a mass grave with the bones of his mother who had been killed in the war by a bomb that had fallen right on top of the bunker where she had taken refuge with my father. My father had escaped death at the time, because he had sat at the entrance of the shelter to watch the "dives" that the German bombers, the Stukas, made in the air to drop their bombs. The shelter collapsed from the bomb on those who had taken refuge there but only my father's legs were crushed. He, at that time, had a particular tenderness in one leg, for some months before he had been wounded in that leg by fragments of a shell, fighting in Albania, which the Greek army had invaded. That's why after

the bombing he ended up in the hospital injured again. The leg was eventually left with a slight deformity but my father was walking normally. He had told us that he had almost been amputated after his first, probably, injury, but he had refused even though he was threatened with gangrene and death. He had preferred to die, rather than be left with one leg. He didn't die after all. After 12 years he got married and when he got old he got a small "war" pension as a war invalid.

We did not find a grave with the bones of my grandmother Theodora, who was a Vlach from Metsovo, and who was married with a dowry from a bequest of the rich Metsovite Averov family related to dowries for poor girls, in the Trikala cemetery. But we found the cemetery to have been extended and to have included the tomb of the Trikaline general and dictator Kondylis, who had been buried outside. And, most importantly, we found Litsa, the daughter of Andreas, my father's friend, who had come to visit the grave of Andreas, who had meanwhile died. As soon as he saw us she was very happy and kissed me, as she used to do when I was little. This was the last kiss I received from this beautiful and good girl, whom I have not seen again in my life since then.

Before my father and I left Trikala, he had taken me to see the high school that he had finished in Trikala. I remember it was a very beautiful building with architectural value. When I went back after 36 years to see it again, it wasn't there. In its place were other worthless buildings, just like the high school diplomas that are now awarded to those who graduate.

The factory, the well, a wild aggressive rooster and a truck left over from World War II

As I said above, we moved from the first house, Katina's, which was near the "Acropolis" factory (which probably also gave the name to the current "Acropolis" bus stop of Chalandri), when my father built his own factory in Nea Filothei . This must have been around 1960. I was already four years old so I have memories of the factory as it was around that time. I remember, i.e. a large tree, sycamore or olive, that had a well next to it. The factory got water from this well, which needed it as a coolant for the cutting and processing of marbles it did. Very quickly, though, a road ran through the factory grounds over where the big tree and the well were.

This road put the factory plot in the city plan. The plot remained large and was used to store large volumes of marble. At the edge of the lot was parked a Bedford truck, which was a remnant of the second world war and which my father had bought from O.D.I.S.Y. (Allied Materiel Management Organization). It was driven by an employee of my father's, Thanasis, who later went into the publishing business with his brother and was very successful. Later it was driven by another employee of my father, Michalis, with whom I also have a photo from a seaside tavern, because, apart from using it for his work, my father also used it from time to time as a private means of

transport. But what has left me with the strongest memory from my father's factory at that time was a rooster. He, to my eyes at the time, was very big but that's not what made me remember him. What made me remember him is that he was very aggressive. He had sometimes taken me hunting in a very wild mood, and I would run in fear to escape, as I later happened to do with a dog, which my father had in the factory. This rooster must have been the kind they use for cockfights.



In a seaside tavern of Attica with the truck Bedford. From left to right: My grandmother, my mother, me, my father, Michalis, the truck driver, the older brother of my mother, Tasos, and in the foreground my brother

The largest machine in the factory was the crate (slitter). I remember that when it functioned, at least one worker was required to shovel wet mud, next to the mass of marble being cut, and drop it onto a moving platform with holes on top of the marble. The liquid mud served as a coolant for the saws that cut the marble. Until the 1970s the factory did not have a crane and I remember the square blocks of marble being pushed onto wooden rollers, as they did when building the pyramids of Egypt.

In the end of the 60s, my father converted this machine to a "diamond" slitter, that means that its saws ended up with diamond-dusted teeth, so the marble blocks were cut more easily, and with pure water coolant that flowed from holes on pipes.



My father's factory in the early 60s. On the marble I, on the left my father and on the right my brother

Another thing I remember from the factory is that it had two toilets, one for the management (my father) and one for the workers. I remember it because, from time to time, my father brought my mother to the factory to clean the toilets with him, and I was impressed by the dirt in the workers' toilet. At that time I was not yet familiar with public toilets and as a measure of comparison I had the toilet at home.



In my father's factory in the early 60s, me on the left and my brother on the right

My father and his workers, the ax and the only car that I drove in my life

I cannot speak with certainty about my father's relations with the workers. All I know is that there was some distance between them. First of all, my father always dressed in a suit and tie, while the workers wore their old work clothes (overalls were not popular back then). However, he must have tried to have good relations with them, because I remember twice that he took us, the whole family, to his workers' homes, where they had a big celebration, perhaps after baptism, once in Peristeri and the other in Chalandri. What had impressed me in those phases is that there were a lot of people at the tables and they were noisy, shouting and laughing, but my father was unusually quiet and we were the first to leave from these celebrations. Maybe he wanted to keep some clear distance, because he was afraid of them. He had told us, after all, that before the dictatorship, an angry worker had gone to his office and told him that they were going to burn down his factory. Therefore, for his safety from such people, he had bought an ax, which he kept in a metal cupboard in his office.

I didn't go to my father's factory often, although it was not far from the center of Chalandri where we lived, so my father walked there every morning, until in 1966 he bought a car, a white Consul Cortina. This was the only car I drove in my life. And that was after my father's death. I remember, however, that at the end of the 60's the factory was not working, only an engineer came from time to time, who without hurrying turned the traditional crate into a diamond crate.

I later learned that when the military coup of April the 21st 1967, which brought the dictatorship of the colonels (1967-1974), took place, my father closed the factory and his workers were unemployed. This was told to me by one of his workers, in the yard of whose house, our whole family had gone in the past for some celebration. I don't know if my father compensated his workers, however, if he didn't, in dictatorship conditions it would be very difficult for them to obtain compensation in court.

The military coup of 1967, foreign radio stations and the state radio in the seven-year dictatorship

I remember the day of the military coup quite well. It must have been a Friday, before the Sunday when schools would be closed for the fourteen-day Easter holiday. We learned that there had been a coup from the radio, which had been playing hymns and folk songs since the morning, if I remember correctly. I, then, was 11 years old and my parents had managed not only to not know how children are born, but also to have no idea about politics. That's why I was happy when I learned that, because of the dictatorship, I wouldn't go to school that day and would go a week after Easter. The fact that it was imposed a military dictatorship meant nothing to me. However, to my father, who had become an officer in the E.L.A.S. during the occupation (that's what my parents called the period from April 1941 to October 1944, when Greece was occupied by the German, Italian and Bulgarian armies), he must have said a lot, because that day he called to my mother's older brother, who had also been a member of E.L.A.S., and they met at our house and then we all went together to the factory. Perhaps he wanted to consult him if there was a risk of arrest, in order to hide. He was not found, if I remember correctly, that day with his brother, who was more likely to be arrested, because he had already served at least 7 years in prison as a communist. Perhaps this uncle and godfather of mine hid that day, or it was difficult to move from Exarchia, where he lived.

That day the military had imposed a curfew after sunset and the evening of that day was unusually quiet for Dourou square in Chalandri, where we were staying. I was impressed by the quiet. My father had a large radio cabinet, with a record player that was almost always broken, and he had attached a large, rather copper wire,

which played the role of an antenna. Thus, from the very first night of the coup, he had found on the short waves the BBC station, which broadcast every few hours from London and in Greek, and thus learned what had happened in Greece, from an independent source. If I'm not mistaken, the emission started with the sound of the big clock that is in the British Parliament building, and then you heard "This is London" and a characteristic music, rather happy. I imagine that it would not be the first time that my father would listen to London, to find out what is happening in Greece. Throughout the "occupation" the Greeks who were related to the liberation movement (E.A.M.), like my father who was one of the organizers of the E.A.M. of Mouzaki (but I imagine others too who are overly(?) curious as well), were learning about what was happening in Greece and on the fronts of the Second World War, from the London radio station, with a serious risk to their freedom, because the German authorities had forbidden strictly the operation of radios.

Later, throughout the dictatorship, although it was dangerous the police to find out that someone was listening to foreign stations, and thus be considered a subversive element with the corresponding consequences, my father heard about what was happening in Greece from other stations abroad too, such as Deutsche Welle, or Moscow and Tirana. I think that the Moscow radio station broadcasting in Greek started the Greek program with music from the song "Katachnia" by Christos Leontis, while the Tirana station started with "The International". What had struck me at that time about the news from the stations of these communist (as they were called then) countries was that they kept talking with numbers about the increase in the production of various industrial or agricultural products, such as steel, coal, wheat, rice, etc. Listening to news from the Greek radio stations (First and Second Program and Armed Forces Information Service, the "Armed Forces" as my mother called it, because the Third Program had no news) you never heard numbers about the increase in production or if you listened, this would not happen often, so that I do not remember it at all. I was annoyed by this constant quoting of numbers at the time but I didn't understand its propaganda value. Much later I learned that in communist countries the success of the government and the happiness of the world was measured by the increase in the production of some basic agricultural and industrial goods, production which was not supposed to increase less than the government plans predicted. If it did not increase at least as much as the plans predicted, those responsible for the plans' implementation were prosecuted for their inadequacy and were often labeled as saboteurs and ended up in prison or exile. That is why, even if the plans were not covered, those responsible for their implementation hid it from their superiors in order not to suffer the consequences. So the reality was hidden from the public and the public heard on the news that the communist regime was making the country richer and richer.

In addition to news, Greek radio stations during the dictatorship, as well as before, played songs from the repertoire of the so-called "light" music, such as the songs of

Manos Hatzidakis, or songs from the Greek cinema, such as of Stavros Xarchakos, and once the so-called "archontorebetika", which were then known as "folk" songs. Mainly, however, the folk songs played on the radio were the songs of the taverns with live music of the time, such as songs by Loizos and the songs sung by Kokotas, Kalatzis, Poulopoulos, Moscholou and Bithikotsis. I don't remember the greek radio playing rebetika or heavy folk, like Kazantzidis and Manolis Angelopoulos, Prodromos Tsoussakis or Giota Lydia. Except some of Vassilis Tsitsanis and a few of Markos Vamvakaris. The "New Wave" that appeared before the dictatorship with composers such as Giannis Spanos also had a special time. In general, there was no junk on the radio, as it has been since the "skyladika" appeared, after the dictatorship. Mikis Theodorakis was banned and I first heard him during the dictatorship from a record that was being circulated illegally. From Dionysis Savvopoulos I remember only listening to the song "Dirlanda". However, illegal radio stations, which were known as "amateur", appeared from time to time. They played heavy folk or rock music, until the police radios found them and shut them down, sometimes even sending those who operated them to prison. One of these was made by a neighbor of ours who was a childhood friend of ours, because he also lived in Dourou Square and was a little older than my brother, Stavros. He broadcast rock music from the roof of his apartment building but after some hours, or a day, he stopped, because his father found out and forbade him to broadcast so that the police would not catch him.

From amateur stations I had heard songs by Savvopoulos, except for "Dirlanda".

But generally in my family, during the 1960s, we didn't listen to much radio. We listened mainly at night, when we all gathered at home. During the day, while it was still light, my brother and I were outside playing. I remember that I made an agreement with my mother that the primary school's homework, which I had to do at home, I would do it after eight in the evening, except of course in the winter when it got dark early and we couldn't stay out at night. My father, however, and we with him by necessity, because we couldn't make noise, listened to selected programs on the radio, such as "The theater of Sunday" and "The theater of Monday" or a program where someone was reading books. In particular, I remember the whole family sitting and listening to Thanasis Petsalis-Diomidis' "Mavrolikoi" on the radio. But I also remember some phases when my father had nothing to do in the factory office and listened to the "transistor" (as they called the small battery-powered portable radios that had appeared at the time) the long- running series of "The House of the Winds ». This series, like "My Bitter Little Love", was very popular at the time and was listened to by housewives who spent their day at home doing housework.

Holidays in Kallithea with "Karagiozis", outdoor theater and walks in airport

I don't remember when I vacationed at my grandmother's house in Kallithea. This must have been when I finished the fifth or sixth grade of elementary school. So I had the opportunity to get to know well my mother's paternal house, which I describe above. At that time, my mother's little brother, Christos, had not married yet, although he was not very young, and he lived with his mother. He was absent all day and I spent the day with my grandmother. I don't remember if I took children's magazines with me to read, like Little Hero, Little Sheriff, or Little Cowboy, which were in vogue at the time, as well as comic magazines like "Classics Illustrated", "Best Comics" and "Laughter and Joy". But, in general, I read quite a few such magazines when I was in elementary school. I also read books, which were classic novels adapted for children. I never understood why they did these adaptations and didn't translate the books as they were, in order the reader to get a proper contact with the literature and not a contact that satisfied the censorial whims of each translator. The books I read were usually "Anchor" editions with color illustrations in hard covers. At that time, I also read for the first time one of the most famous novels, "Les Misérables" by Victor Hugo, adapted by "Minos" publications. I re-read it in its entirety at the age of 17, when I had finished the fifth grade of the six-form high school. It had moved me unimaginably, regardless of whether such a novel is not worth reading in old age, as a Panteion professor had told us, who recommended that students read any other book in their free time, and not only school books, which they were forced to read. He knew, it seems, that the Greeks do not read books much, unlike the peoples of Western Europe.

Near my grandmother's house there was a huge rock, near which today they have built the soccer field of Kallithea, and a park next to it. I saw it every time my mom took me to my grandma's house, so when I lived in that house one day I told my grandma to let me go up. My grandmother wouldn't leave me and when I asked her why, she told me that it had fairies! My grandmother said it with such confidence that, although it seemed exaggerated, I began to wonder if it wasn't a lie! I was such a fool. However, I may not have climbed the rock then, but at its base I watched a theatrical performance with my grandmother, "The Trial of Kolokotronis". It might have been the first theater performance I ever saw, because my parents didn't take me to the theater. Another performance that I had watched then, was a performance of the "shadow theater", known as "Karagiozis". My uncle had taken us to this show with his car, a Decave (DKV), which he had bought second-hand, just as my father's brother had also bought his Opel second-hand. Until then I had never seen "Karagiozis". My uncle I remember had not taken me only in this show. He often

took me for car rides. Sometimes he would take me to the airport, which was then by the sea, to watch the planes take off, and sometimes he would take me with him to visit the shops and houses of his customers, who had paid him in bills of exchange and these bills had been "protested". He was asking them to give him the money they owed him under the threat of putting them in jail. But I remember my uncle taking me for walks even before he got a car. He was taking me on a Vespa type motorcycle that he had bought at the time. My uncle must have loved me at that time, because I remember that his gift was the first transistor I ever got in my life, as well as the first watch. Much later we stopped getting along well, so for many years before he died I didn't go to his house.

Holidays in the popular western suburb of Athens, Petroupoli

Another summer, the one before or the one after I had stayed with my grandmother, I had vacationed at my aunt's, my mother's younger sister's house in Petroupolis. At that time, my grandmother usually stayed with my aunt, to look after her children (two daughters) who were young, because my aunt worked in her husband's shop, which sold clothing items, fabrics, sewing items and other related things, the which interested housewives. I think he had a big ad for 'Butterfly' threads above his shop window and the shop window must have read 'Novelties'. I, at my aunt's house, played with my cousins, who were a few years younger than me, on the long narrow balconies of the apartment, which surrounded it and a part of them was above the main street. They were suitable for a children's bike. I must have stayed with my aunt for about a fortnight. Nevertheless, when after some ten years I had asked my cousins if they remembered this period, they did not remember anything. Then I realized how much children are loaded with information from a young age, with the result that some of their unusual experiences are hidden in the subconscious.

The dream trip to the earthquake-stricken Kefallonia and Ithaca in 1964

The two summers I vacationed with my relatives will remain unforgettable to me, because usually during the summers, while I was in elementary school, we didn't go anywhere. But when we did go, we went to places that were worth it. My father knew how to choose. Our first long trip was in 1964 to Kefalonia. At the time I was eight years old and my brother was ten. We had stayed in Sami, in a cheap hotel, where the hotelier had added two beds to the room with two beds that my father had booked, so there were four of us sleeping in one room. At that time, Kefalonia didn't have as much tourism as it does now and was very quiet. It must have been the first time I had ever stayed in a hotel and I ate in a restaurant, and I really enjoyed

this treatment. What had impressed me the most about Kefalonia at that time was not the impressive caves with stalactites and stalagmites that we had visited (Drogarati and Melissani), but the many two-story houses that were ruins. These houses must have been abandoned after the devastating earthquakes of 1953, and in the 11 years that had passed since then, their owners had left in search of a better fortune away from Kefalonia. I saw a couple of these again, many years later, in Fiskardo, on the northern coast of Kefalonia. In fact, from the ruins I visited at the time in Fiskardo, I also took an Arithmetic notebook of a girl who, at the time, in 1953 when the earthquakes happened, was probably in the last grade of primary school. Another thing, which I will never forget, is a certain phase when we were passing with my father near a cemetery with a very nice view of the sea, because it was high up, and my father had expressed the desire to be buried in such a cemetery with a view, when he was dying. He was not buried, of course, but what would be the point, since the dead see nothing?

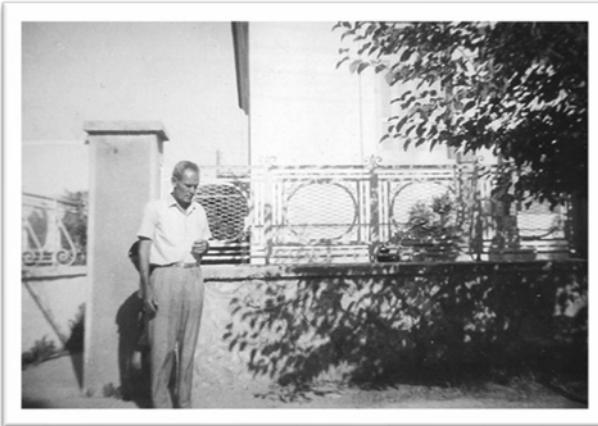
The second long trip that has remained in my memory is the trip to Metsovo, which we did in 1969, when I had finished the first year of high school. Before I talk about that, I would also like to talk about the summers at the Dourou Square house, before I even went to high school. Then I will talk about high school and then about the trip to Metsovo.

The summer movie theater across the street from my house, the kids hanging from the wall or climbing the tree to see a movie for free, the foul-mouthed kid

The house in Dourou Square had the peculiarity of being opposite a summer cinema, from which it was separated by the road and a large plot elevated from the road. The cinema, "Titania", was located on this elevated plot, which was also surrounded by barbed wire. But the barbed wire fence had a big hole through which one could enter the plot, so the kids who wanted to hang from the cement blocks surrounding the summer cinema to watch a movie could easily do so. The children had made holes in the cement blocks and by stepping on the holes they reached the top, where a wooden grid with slats crossed, about a meter high, began. Through the gaps of the slats the children could watch a movie with fear always in their hearts. They were afraid of the owner of the cinema, Mr. Sofroni (I think), who would raid from time to time and chase away the nippers. Kids would also go up to the roof of a ground floor complex of shops, adjacent to the cinema, and there they would lie down and watch a movie. The owner of the cinema was chasing them there too and it happened, at

some point, that I was among them. And while the others had quickly jumped off the roof and left, I didn't have time to leave the plot adjacent to the cinema and was caught by the owner. He had grabbed me, I remember, by the arm and was pulling me saying he was going to take me to the police. What a cry I had shed then... And how scared I had been... Finally, the owner let me go and, then, I thought that I had been very lucky. Little did I know that I hadn't committed any crime and the police wouldn't do anything to me!

Other children, to escape the chase, climbed some huge eucalyptus trees that were on the sidewalk of the road that ran between the plot and our house. They had nailed large nails to the trunks of the eucalyptus trees and made a kind of ladder that reached up to the high branches of the eucalyptus trees, where they sat and watched a movie. There were, however, a few rascals who could not get the best places of the peepers, and therefore confined themselves to climbing the pillars which supported the iron door, which led to the front of the building, where my house was. From here one could only see one third of the cinema screen and specifically the upper third of the screen. For these kids, who had nothing better to do, that was enough. But come on, I considered that these pillars belonged to my house and that's why I had the right to chase away the little ones! Although I was afraid to mess with them, at some point I got into a fight with one of them. He was shorter than me, but he had such a foul language that it scared me. But it happened that day that there was a rather husky friend of mine in the yard of my house who, when I asked him if he would support me if I didn't get along with the tramp, he had said yes. So I hit the foul-mouthed, knocking him down and banging his head on the pavement! I may have taken my revenge, but even then I consider my outburst excessive.



The pillar of the entrance door to the building that used to be my house, for which I quarrelled with the foul-mouthed one. My father is in front

Anyway, I too had climbed the cement blocks at one point to see a movie gratis and, at one point, I remember myself trying to watch a movie through the bottom crack of a cinema door that led out into the lot and served as an emergency exit. . This door was never opened. But to see through the gap between it and the ground, you had to lie on the ground. But you still couldn't see well, because it was next to the screen, so you were looking at the screen too sideways.



The elevated lot across the street from my house with the movie theater emergency exit that never opened and the cement block wall where we used to climb and the wooden rack at the top of the wall from which we watched the movie theater. Above the door the screen.

Me and my brother with snow in our hand.

And at some other stage, I remember myself going up to the roof of the apartment building, where Stavros, my brother's friend, lived, and trying to watch a movie from there. But it was so far that you could neither hear what the actors were saying nor read the subtitles of the film. I think, at that stage, I had tried to see the western "For a few dollars more".

But even if I didn't want to see a movie for free, whether I wanted to or not, I listened to it all summer evenings and from the veranda, in front of the entrance to my house, I could see a third of the screen. Quite a noisy house, that is, although I was young then and the last thing on my mind was noise.

The unbearable summer heat, English and the honor student Natasha

For me, the worst thing about summers spent at home was the heat. At that time, in addition to television, which did not exist, which is why the cinema was so impressive, the houses did not even have air conditioning, because air conditioning was too expensive. I remember some summer afternoons when my whole family, to cool off, would lie on the floor of the central corridor of my house. The floor was made of colored small tiles, different for each room. I remember myself lying on the floor reading the book "Captain Grant's Children" by Jules Verne, which Natasha had lent me. Who was Natasha then? Natasha was the niece of my kindergarten teacher and as well as niece of the fighter of the "Juliana" Spyros Provatas.

Together with her, me and my brother, had private English lessons for two years, which were given to us by Miss Teta. Natasha was the model student at that time, beautiful, with an extremely well-groomed appearance, excelling in school subjects, always on time and well prepared in English. She must have been the only daughter without siblings, if I remember correctly, and the father was a civil engineer. Once that I had gone to her house for some work of hers, I saw a huge, by the standards of the time, home library. Probably in it I would find the Jules Verne book I mentioned above, which was three volumes. With a civil engineer father and so diligent in school, with left-wing relatives too who, as left-wingers, paid particular attention to education, it is no coincidence that when Natasha finished the sixth form high school, she went to the most difficult higher education school in the country: to the Faculty of Architecture of E.M.P. (National Technical University of Athens).

With nostalgia I remember that time when Natasha came to our house and we waited together for Miss Teta whom we called, like all the teachers, "Mrs" Teta. I had private lessons when I was in fifth and sixth grade. Then my father enrolled us in a tutoring school to learn English, where I went for the next three years. I think that if I finally learned English, it is because I started properly, with private lessons. If I went to a tutoring school from scratch, my English would be very poor. Since that time, I saw Mrs. Teta only once more: The dictatorship had fallen and she had temporarily returned from Paris, where Spyros Provatas had taken refuge during it. He had passed by our house in Dourou Square, together with Mrs. Teta. So I learned that Mrs. Teta had made up with him and they were together in Paris. I didn't ask if they had been in a relationship since the time Mrs. Teta gave us private English lessons. I have never been indiscreet in my life and that is why I could never ask such questions.

"Welcome the dollar": The Greek-American relatives

Another thing worth mentioning about the period when I was still a child is our Greek-American relatives. My father had two cousins, Rina and Vaso, who had left Trikala and gone to the USA. at the beginning of the 1920s. There they worked, "made a living", married Greek immigrants and had children and grandchildren. One, in fact, Rina, married twice, the second a Venezuelan immigrant. These cousins came from time to time, together with their family, to Greece for holidays. In fact, while my grandfather, my father's father, was alive, they also sent money (dollars in an envelope).



In our first house in Chalandri (of Katina) with Vasso from America. From left to right: My uncle Meltos with my brother, my grandfather Ilias, Vasso's son, my mother, Vasso and her husband

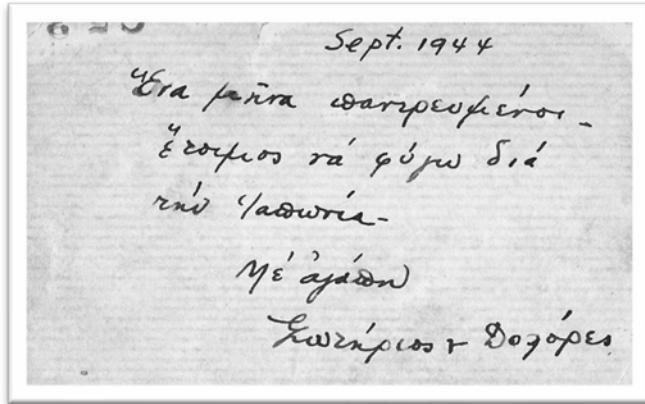
Later, one of their children, Sotiris Panos (child from Rina's first husband), whom we called Spike, every time he came to Greece, he brought me and my brother gifts. When we were little boys he had brought me, I remember, an air gun that threw corks and my brother a pinball machine. Later he would bring us American books that had to do with US geography or history. For me, these books were impressive, because they had color covers and inset color photos, which you did not find in Greek books at the time, because printing technology had not yet developed so much in Greece. But my father stood up to Spike, too. He gave him an important family heirloom, a scimitar, which he kept in one

long narrow chest that he had brought with him when he permanently moved from Trikala to Athens. According to my father, this scimitar belonged to someone closer to Spike than my father. Also, every time Spike came to Greece, my father treated him, as he did for all our Greek-American relatives, in the best taverns of Chalandri. The best of them was one at the beginning of Penteli Avenue, near Dourou Square, which I think that was known as Yiannopoulos's tavern. We only went there in the summer, since our relatives "from America" came in the summer. I remember it had waiters dressed in the special attire of the waiters of the best hotels and also had live music. What had impressed me about this tavern, is that, as I had heard, that the owner of the tavern or his wife had given one of their kidneys to their son or daughter, because he had run out of kidneys. I thought it was horrible to give one of your kidneys so someone wouldn't die. But, in general, I did not listen to talk about diseases then. The first time I heard about cancer was when they were talking about a girl I had seen a couple of times near our house who died of this disease, despite the fact that she was about 26 years old, if I remember correctly. I had never heard of someone young I knew dying of an illness before.

Spike, I learned at the time, had served in the US Navy and had taken early retirement because of some serious health problems. Then, in the late sixties, he was about forty-five. And yet, not only did he not give up, he also found a new wife in Greece. He had divorced the previous one he had, Dolores, after having a child.



Spike (Sotiris) with Dolores before going off to fight in the Pacific during World War II



The back of the photo: **Sept. 1944 Beeing married only one month ago I am ready to go to Japan. With love Sotiris and Dolores**

After marrying his new wife, a Greek woman who was a very cheerful person, he settled in a very beautiful detached house with a garden in Glyfada. We had been to this house as a family a couple of times and they had prepared the table for us. In the garden I saw for the first time a new, for me, game with hoops that you threw from afar. I don't remember what they called it. What impressed me the most in this house was the library. I was impressed that the books were mostly paperbacks with colorful covers. They were pocket books, as they were called, when they first appeared in America, but here, however, books of this kind had not yet arrived. The books that were in circulation and you found them in bookstores or on carts at fairs, were large format and the children's had hard illustrated covers with pictures, while the rest had bindings made of leather substitutes, leather, or plastic, black or dark in general, in color. There were also some clothbound, but also those had an "austere look". The books with paper covers, had covers of a dark yellow, beige or gray color. As a result of these bindings, libraries, like the library in Natasha's house, had a very "serious" look, with so many black books, while Spike's library had a colorful and therefore "happy" look. Another thing worth mentioning about Spike's house is that he had a car like an old Rolls-Royce, black in color, which he had in his yard tied to the ground with a thick chain. To my father's question about the chain, he replied that he was afraid of it being stolen and that he had heard of other cars that had been stolen from Glyfada. Back then, of course, there were no car alarms and so the world didn't suffer with broken alarms that wake you up abruptly while sleeping without reason and with impunity, as it happens today.

After all, he didn't stay long in Greece, Spike. He divorced his wife, found a beautiful girl of about twenty-five, who was about twenty years older than him, married her

and he took her to America and had a baby girl with her. We haven't seen him since he came back to America.



With Spike (Sotiris). From left to right: Me in front, Mrs. Popi behind, my mother next to her, Spike's second wife next to her, Spike next to her, my brother in front of them, next to Spike my father and next to him George Drakos

Among our Greek-American relatives, it is also worth mentioning Frank, Rina's Venezuelan second husband, Rina who will be unforgettable not only for the kisses she gave me, but also for her heavy "Vlach" accent in Greek. In America, for so many years, she wouldn't hear Greek, except from her relatives, and that's why she kept the heavy "Vlach" accent of Thessaly in the 1920s. Even in the letters she sent us, mostly greeting cards, the words he wrote as he pronounced them. Frank, then, was a very happy man who loved to play with us, namely me and my brother, and make us laugh. I remember that he used to tell jokes that, of course, were translated for us, because he didn't speak Greek, and he showed us various tricks with or without decks of cards. That is, in addition to the tricks he taught us in the deck, he always had with him something that would make us surprised, such as a fake pool of vomit, a fake spider, or, most impressively, some very thin wire that ended in a flattened edge. This he put under the tablecloth of a table, around which we sat, without noticing it. Then, he would put a glass over the end of the wire that was hidden by the tablecloth and make the glass rise and tilt, without us knowing why this was happening. Once he had brought with him a girl from Venezuela, with whom we had all gone out together a couple of times and once we had gone to the sea for a swim. The girl, when she got back to Venezuela, sent us a thank you card from Caracas.

I think this is also the only card I've ever gotten from Latin America.



With Rina and Frank at Pentelis monastery. On the left is my brother, next to him is Rina, next to her is my mother, in the car of my uncle Meltos, me and my uncle, and on the right Frank

Later, while I was in the sixth form of secondary school, I also corresponded with Frank in English. I remember, in one of his letters he had a prospect of the twin towers that would be built in New York (Rina and Frank lived in New York, in Long Island) and all Americans considered them their pride. At the time, I could not have imagined that I would see them both complete and symbolizing the greatness of New York and that I would later experience their total destruction on September 11, 2001. I don't think Frank was alive when they were destroyed by the hijackers. I had lost touch with him when I graduated from high school because I was stupid enough to send him a handwritten two-page card where I accused the Americans of being imperialists and on the front page of the two-page card I had drawn a hammer and sickle. It was Christmas 1974 and I had already become a Trotskyist.

Before I pass from the narration of the events of my childhood to the narration of the events of adolescence, I would like to say a few things about a rather sad story related to my family. And this is my grandfather Philippa's adventure with his mental health.

My grandfather and the electric shocks' asylum in the 60s

I don't know exactly how things happened, however, the first memories I have of my grandfather are the visits I made to him with my mother in a psychiatric hospital, in Magoufana (today's Pefki). He stayed there for several years. From what I have heard, he was driven there after a violent episode with his wife, my grandmother, due to irrational jealousy. Absurd, because at the time my grandfather began to pose a threat to her, my grandmother was in her fifties and very broken from an extremely tiring life. She had lived through two world wars, was a refugee from Pontos and had raised five children, while until the second world war she also took care of her in-laws. And around the age of fifty she was again forced to emigrate from Sparta to Athens. How broken she was can be seen from the photo of her with my brother in her arms, in 1955. And yet my grandfather's irrationality did not fall from the sky. My grandfather was a builder and all his life in Greece, where he came at the age of 25, he worked in construction. In his old age, around sixty, he fell from one of the upper floors of a building where he was working and broke both his legs. He was unable to work again and started drinking heavily. Not that he didn't drink before, but his disability pushed him over the edge. Perhaps the alcohol made him so dangerous that his wife and children drove him to a mental institution. There the psychiatrists took it upon themselves to make him a "lamb". In this phase I also started to see him. Before 1960 I have no memories, at least in the conscious and not in the subconscious, so I can't remember what it was like before he entered the mental hospital.

So I remember the visits I made with my mother to the mental hospital from the early 1960s. The mental hospital, as all mental hospitals usually do, had a large garden where the patients could go out, those who I imagine were not in isolation. From this garden I remember a patient who picked up cigarette butts from the ground and smoked them.

I had never smoked before, so I could not imagine how much a smoker needs a cigarette, especially when he is under extremely unfavorable conditions, such as in a mental hospital. And that's why, seeing the man smoking the "butts" I thought he did it because he was crazy. From my grandfather's room I remember that, when my mother and I were inside to visit him, several of his incarcerated acquaintances came by to see us and ask about us. It is incredible how much incarcerated people of all kinds need to communicate with the outside world. Only if one gets to know from the inside, as if imprisoned, these "blessed" institutions, where they close the world, will be able to understand how much the "inside" needs the "outside". Among the acquaintances of my grandfather, who came to see us, was a beautiful girl, about eighteen, who did not seem to have anything, as she herself assured. God knows what misfortune had led her in there. So this girl, every time she found us in my

grandfather's room, she read us poems. Poems that she wrote herself and they seemed quite nice to me, at least from a point of view, because, of course, I don't remember the content. And I say quite nice, because they were big and they had measure and rhyme and you understood what they were saying. They were not abstract, as is usual with modern poetry.

My grandfather, whenever we went, gave me some pocket money. It seems they allowed the inmates to have some money on them. Of the conversations we had I remember nothing but his references to electric shocks. He had been given some electric shocks, I never asked how many, because at that time electric shocks were still 'in vogue'. It goes without saying that my grandfather, like any wretch who had the misfortune of being electrocuted, had the worst opinion of this kind of "therapeutic" torture. I don't remember anything else from the conversations because, after all, we don't sit around much. Shortly after our arrival we were leaving, taking the bus that stopped in front of the "clinic". Because my mother called it a "clinic", since the word mental hospital evokes feelings of disparagement and fear for those who had the misfortune of being taken there. The image I will never forget is the wires that surrounded the courtyard of the psychiatric hospital, as I saw them while waiting with my mother at the bus stop to catch the return bus. I will never forget them, because behind them I saw people looking at us with some bitterness in their eyes. The bitterness that the prisoner feels when he sees the free entering and leaving freely from the place of his confinement.

At some point my grandfather left the "clinic" on leave. He went out to attend the wedding of his eldest son, Tasos, and the feast that followed. But he didn't go out alone. He was accompanied by a nurse, who had taken the responsibility of giving him his pills. Psychotropic drugs, at that time, were quite effective and could keep a person sedated. Electric shocks were being abused in my opinion. What I remember about the nurse, who I met at the house where the wedding party took place, is that he was a very cheerful and laughing person. Unbelievable for a man who did such a job. My grandfather, I think, the very day after the day of the wedding and feast, was taken to the mental hospital. I happened to spend the last two years of his life with this grandfather. But that was when I was in high school and that's what I'll talk about below.

The unfortuned girls of the densely populated detached house in the second Chalandri Square, Dourou Square

I don't want to end my story about my childhood without saying a few words about the girls in the building where our houses were, not only because the girls represent my favorite "fair sex", but also because I find it useful informing the reader about what the relationships between boys and girls were like when I was in primary school, namely in the 60s.

As it still happens today in this country (and it will happen for many years to come, because the Greeks not only cannot but also do not want to change), from their earliest childhood, boys and girls were taught by their family and from their environment the roles of male and female, which they would play throughout their lives. Boys should have soldiers as role models, and girls' role models should be mothers, housewives and brides-to-be looking for grooms, or romantic partners, as is done today (then a girl had to be engaged to go out with a boyfriend without being accompanied by someone from her family, if she did not want to be negatively commented on by her social environment). So the toys that were given to my brother and me were different from the ones that were given to the girls. For example, Spike had brought me and my brother as gifts an air gun and a pinball machine. He would never bring us dolls or miniature kitchenware. For girls of the time, the most common gift was a doll. At the Carnival the boys would buy fake swords or pistols that had capsules that made a lot of noise when you pulled the trigger and they went off. Girls with swords and pistols you would never see. For me, the fake gun that took capsules was my favorite toy, no matter what path I took when I grew up. In fact, I remember that at the Carnival party, held at Nestorides' private elementary school, in 1968, I dressed up as a cowboy and had two fake pistols hanging from my waist.

And as they teach the soldiers, so they let us boys know, that girls are an inferior species, which, as inferior, we should mock and belittle at every opportunity. From our early childhood then, as it is now, we were pulled away from girls and taught to subconsciously underestimate them. So girls were also taught that boys are by nature violent and aggressive and that's why they will always make fun of and belittle girls, as a result of which girls are also subconsciously instilled with dislike for boys.

Anyway, when I was little, even though I liked guns and war toys, after all, the cinemas of the time often played war movies with themes from World War II as well as cowboys, I must not have been a very good student of my role. I remember myself playing with the girls in the building that was my home in Dourou Square, besides the girl I sat with for a year in primary school. There were three of these girls, although I don't remember if the third lived in the building when I was in elementary school or showed up when I was in high school. They were Anny, Rinoula and Panagiota.



On the staircase leading to the entrance of my house. Anny on the left, me in the middle and on the right Renoula dressed as Little Red Riding Hood

Anny was the little girl I mentioned I first saw, when she came to the raised plot with the summer cinema across the street from my house and knocked down the little house I had built for a kitten. She had a brother, Mimi, six years older than me, who became my brother's friend. Anny was a couple of years younger than me and lived on the roof. Rinoula was several years younger than me and lived in the front basement. Panagiota must have been Anny's age and lived in the back basement. She had a brother two or three years younger than her. More than all the girls I played with Anny and less with Rinoula, while I rarely played any hide-and-seek, chase or "apples", with Panagiota. And of course, I was not spared the usual question addressed to the boys of the time: When you grow up, who will you marry? I don't remember if I answered. If I were to answer, I imagine I'd say I'm going to marry Anny. Of course, I didn't marry any of these girls. I imagine that I would answer Anny, because I played with her alone in my house, while I played with the others in the courtyard of the building. I remember that Rinula liked to play "lame". Lame was a girl's game and you hardly ever saw boys participating. But I remember playing lame a few times, in the design Rinoula had drawn on the entrance plaques of the building. It goes without saying that I had played with Rinoula and that she was better than me at lame. With Anny, the relationship, as it was between boy and girl who differed in roles, was extremely competitive. And that cost me a day dearly. In particular, when at some point I found out that she had received a very low overall grade at school, I started making fun of her out loud in the courtyard of the building, so that the neighbors could hear it. Anny, to make me shut up, resorted to

her older and much taller brother, who came down from his house on the roof to beat me. I, not hoping for a saving intervention from my mother, had to hide, even inside the house, because Anny's brother had entered the house and was looking for me. Fortunately, I had been clever enough and Anny's brother couldn't find me to beat me. I was hiding in a built-in wardrobe!

And yet, my relations with Anny's brother, Mimi, were generally good. I remember we used to play a lot of chess together. We used to play so much chess that, because we kept in our minds the number of victories of each, I remember that we reached numbers over a hundred. We also played a lot of Monopoly. I don't remember playing chess or Monopoly with Anny. With Mimi and my brother, of course, I also played war games, such as blowpipe fights. We used to get reeds from the stream I mentioned above. And the blowpipes were made by Mimi, who always liked constructions. He even made a rocket out of an empty spray bottle once. We used to put birbilonia in the blowpipes. We found birbilonia in abundance, because outside the main entrance of the building, a few meters away, there was a large tree that produced small balls, the so-called birbilonia. I never found out what tree that was and never cared to ask. Because one thing I was never taught was to ask the names of the plants and trees I see around me.

Finally with Mimi, in some phases, at that time, we visited with investigative moods a dilapidated abandoned school, "Fos", which existed on the street that was our house, today's Costa Varnalis street but then Vasileos Pavlou street. It was quite far from our house but it was interesting, both because we searched the rubble and rubbish in the dilapidated rooms to see if we could find anything interesting, and because it had swings, monkey bars and gymnastic rings hanging from pipes.

The "swings" of Chalandri, a foul-mouthed nipper and a near-miss fatal mistake

And one more thing I need to mention about my childhood are my experiences from the unique playground of Chalandri, which is next to but lower than the central square of the city. At that time it was known as "swings" because it was the only part of Chalandri that had a couple of swings. I rarely went to this playground, because I had children to play near my house and it was difficult to serve the whole of Chalandri with two or three swings. As was the case with a round platform that went round and round, the demand was so great that eventually the strongest, by reason of age, kid got on the swing. Girls were rare, because the "swings" collected a lot of vagrancy. I remember a certain phase when one of the bums had a fight with me because I was vying for a place on the round platform but he fell short, because finally he was confronted by my brother, who was two years older than me, and, unable to beat me, he started swearing at me. I'll never forget one of his curses,

because it was in a language that the kids I used to associate with didn't speak: "The doctor said to eat dick." And I don't think that the situation has changed at all in the public playgrounds, I believe, in fact, that it has gotten worse, because immigrant children go to the playgrounds and they are easy targets for the Greek children who are mostly racists.

And yet, my worst memory of the swings of Chalandri is not the episode with the foul-mouthed bum. It's the incidence when, while playing chase in an adjacent building, in order to avoid getting caught, I had the bright idea to jump from the fourth floor stairs to the ground. Luckily there was a sand hill on the ground and I fell on it. If it hadn't existed, I don't know if I would be alive now to write my autobiography.

(SIX FORM) HIGH SCHOOL AND ADOLESCENT YEARS

A high school with no girls and 70 potential enemies, including one who tried to beat me for fun

With these and with these, I finished the private primary school and took the language and mathematics exams to enter the public six-grade high school for boys in Chalandri. It goes without saying that I passed and enrolled, during the dictatorship, in this unique gymnasium of Halandrio, from where I graduated about a month before the fall of this military dictatorship.

What impressed me the most when I entered high school was not that there were no girls, because the girls went to the same building but at different times, but that where in the sixth grade I had three classmates in my class, I suddenly found myself with about two hundred, of which about 70 in my section (we were divided into three sections). The absence of girls no longer meant anything to me who had already been taught that girls are an inferior species and at the same time alienated me from even how necessary one gender is to the other. However, having to deal with 70 potential enemies from the 4 I had in elementary school brought me down hard. Luckily, I wasn't short (nor tall) so I wasn't targeted by hanging out with other kids my age. There were, unfortunately, also older children, because they had stayed in the same class, but fortunately, in the first year of high school, none of them tried to beat me. At most I faced a few derogatory comments for being a good student, because, as it always happens, "What the fox can't reach, he makes hangers for". But it was not generally accepted to discredit the best students. The majority saw value in being a good student. In fact, in high school, when I entered, there was also someone who wrote better than all the children in the country in the entrance exams (at least that's what they told us) and for that they gave him the 18-volume encyclopedic dictionary "Helios" as a prize (something I learned a couple of years ago from him, because until then I thought they had given him the 28-volume Great Greek Encyclopedia). It is very likely that he wrote better than everyone else in these entrance exams, because when we finished the sixth form high school and took the university exams, he passed first in the Medical School of the University of Athens. This was Adamopoulos who, together with Darmos, remained the best students throughout the years. One became a cardiologist and the other a chemist.

I may not have been hit by anyone when I started going to the first year of high school, but I didn't "get it clean" until the end. A few days before the end of the year, some asshole, whose name I don't even remember, attacked me and tried to beat me up. He didn't make it, though, because we were the same age and he was only slightly taller than me. I don't remember his name, although I was very annoyed by this injustice at the time, just as I don't remember the name of another arsehole, who had attempted to humiliate me when I was in fifth grade of the elementary

school and he was in the sixth. The only thing I remember is the last name of the brother of my elementary school classmate, Giorgia. His name was Anastasiou. Back then, when I was unfairly beaten in elementary school, I dreamed that when I grew up, I would take revenge. Unfortunately, as one grows older one learns that as good as revenge is, it is also difficult. And usually those who wrong others, take care during their lives to protect themselves from the revenge of their victims.

The beatings by students and teachers, the national anthem, the raising of the flag and the prayer

In general, there was violence in the relationships between the students and you could see it during the breaks where some big and strong bullies cursed and hit smaller and weaker kids. But there were no gangs, nor easy victims, as immigrants are today. Break time violence was the last thing on teachers' minds. Perhaps several of them were happy, because, in general, the regime at the high school was a camp regime. And in the camps the violence of the strong against the weak is considered useful, because it trains the soldiers (who practice it) to use violence, even to kill, those whom the officers shall tell them they must fight, whether they be strangers or the "enemy within". On the other hand, when it comes to victims, they learn to hate the whole world because it does nothing to protect them. Unfortunately, they become willing to take this hatred out on anyone given the opportunity, foreigner or local.

In high school camp status was confirmed daily in many ways, such as the schedule. When we had lessons in the morning, we had to be at school from a quarter past eight, because the lesson started at half past eight. Everyone knows how difficult it is for children to wake up in the morning. From a quarter past eight until half past eight, we were lined up and asked to stand silently and at attention for the flag to be raised, with some children simultaneously singing the blood-curdling Greek national anthem, which begins with "I know you from the terrible edge of the sword" (Solomos, of course, who wrote it, never joined the army). If any child spoke in low voice to the person next to him at that time, he heard a tirade from the invigilator teacher and could even get a smack. I got one for this reason, in the first year of high school, from the invigilator Mr. Karalagas. I got another one from him in the classroom, in the second year of high school, because I was talking in low voice to the person next to me during the lesson. These were the only smacks I got from teachers in the sixth form high school. When a few years later, after I had finished high school, I learned that the person who had hit me had died relatively young, I was next to rejoice.

We did not end with the raising of the flag and the national anthem. Next came the prayer. Again they asked a child to come out of the lines and say the "Our Father"

and then the "by the wishes of our holy fathers". After the prayer was over and there was no announcement to be made by the high school principal, or some fascist sermon by some professor, such as for the victory over the communist sympathizers in 1949 which was usually done by the mathematician Mr. Flessas, we, those who were sufficiently shorn, were allowed to enter the classes. The few who had more than two centimeters of hair were sent away to go get a haircut and then come to class. I at some point had more hair than two centimeters and because the professor who did the check, while we were lined up, kicked out others to go get a haircut and didn't kick me out, they showed me to the professor asking him to explain this distinction in my favor. He told them I deserved better treatment because I was a good student, so I got away with it. This professor was the mathematician, Mr. Flessas, about whom I spoke before and will speak further.

The invisible high school girls, the flag raising and night classes

At a quarter past eight in the morning we went three times a week, from Monday to Wednesday, week after week. In the weeks when we didn't go in the morning from Monday to Wednesday, we went in the morning from Thursday to Saturday. When we didn't go to school in the morning, we went to a quarter past two in the afternoon, i.e. one week Thursday to Saturday and the other from Monday to Wednesday. When we, the boys (the males) didn't go in the morning, the girls (the females), the students of the High School for Girls of Chalandri, went in the morning. And when we went in the morning, the girls went in the afternoon. The only time we saw the girls was when we came home from school in the afternoon and they went, or when they came home from school and we went. Those who went were always in a hurry, because they always arrived at the last minute, so there was no chance for the boys to strike up a conversation with the girls, besides it was embarrassing for the girls to talk to boys they didn't know. After all, girls in high school were also treated like soldiers, who in addition to lines, flag raising and lowering, prayers and tied hair, had to wear uniforms, namely blue overalls, knee-length, aprons. We, at least, did not wear caps with the high school logo, as students were required to wear in the past.

When we went to school in the afternoon, before sunset we were lined up and with the national anthem sang in the background, the flag was lowered. Then the lessons continued even though it was getting late. And these hours, the evening, were the most relaxed, because teachers and students were tired from the whole day, because even before coming to school the students did their homework at home and the teachers prepared the deliveries. The worst phase was when we had school on Wednesday afternoon, because we came home in the evening and the next day we had school in the morning. We had to cut our necks to get ready at home for the

next day's lessons in a few hours. And the best was when we had class on Saturday morning and then Monday afternoon. We did our lessons on Monday morning and had the whole Sunday free to rest.

The camp environment and the parades of the future soldiers

It wasn't just the things I mentioned above that made the high school work like a camp. There were many others. First of all the absences. No one went to high school, at least until the third year of high school, because they wanted to. He was required by law to go. And in fact his hourly absences were recorded in the smallest detail. They were recorded by the "absenteeologist", a student, who was obliged to record those who were absent and report them to the teacher in charge of the class, who was the one who taught the Ancient Greek course. Every day we had five or six hours of class, with fifteen minute breaks between classes, so

someone who missed one day would get 6 absences. The total number of absences one could make was 100 unjustified and 200 justified. In order for someone to excuse his absence for certain hours, he needed to present a certificate that he was sick from his parents. If he was absent for more than a day, he needed a certificate from a doctor. If someone exceeded 100 unjustified absences or 200 justified absences, they stayed in the same class, namely they had to repeat all the courses of the year from the beginning. And he did this perforce, because, as I said, school up to the third year of high school was compulsory. In short, whether a teenager wanted it or not, he or she was forced to spend at least three years of his or her adolescence in a camp environment, learning lessons that he or she did not choose and that, in the majority of them, were of no use. Lessons I will talk about below.

And from fourth through sixth grade, we were again forced to learn subjects we didn't want and would be useless to us for the rest of our lives, except for those that had something to do with the subjects we needed to know to get into university. If we didn't go to these classes, or didn't pass the exams, we stayed in the same class and had to do all the courses all over again in order to pass the classes and take the university exams. The bad thing is that in the future, after the seven-year military dictatorship from 1967 to 1974, things not only did not improve in terms of absenteeism, they actually got worse. Thus, 41 whole years after the fall of the dictatorship, the unjustified absences allowed are even less, specifically 65, and the justified 130. In a few words, on the issue of absences that form the basis of the militarization of the educational system, this country not only it didn't go forward by abolishing them, it went backwards by reducing by far the permitted absences. This is a typical case of regression.

Another striking feature that made the high school work like a camp was its student parades. Several days before each of the two national anniversaries, the 28th October and the 25th March, groups of classes, numbering together hundreds of students, rehearsed parades for hours in the school yard accompanied by drums. So, before the day of the student parade arrived, which was the anniversary day, all the students had learned to walk like soldiers. And we even liked going to the rehearsals of the parades, because that way we were absent from the lesson. In fact, with these rehearsals I not only learned to standardize my walk, putting first the left foot in front and then the right, but I also learned to play the rhythm of the parade, since, in some phases, they had given me too to play one of the drums. But also on the day of the student parade that took place on a central street of the city to the central square, where they laid a wreath at the monument to the "fallen" (in Chalandri at that time they built a statue of a soldier as a monument), attendance at school was mandatory. Whoever was absent got 6 absences.

Orthodox Christians perforce, a priest who "sent us to the devil" and the Confession

Another feature that made the six-form high school camp was compulsory church attendance. If a student didn't go to church on the Saturdays we were taken to church (I don't think every Saturday), he got at least two absences, since we left the church after 10 in the morning, maybe even 11. Church attendance, however, it was the most shocking inconsistency between the desire of the teachers to make us good Christians by force and the reluctance of the students to attend the Divine Liturgy, who not only did not understand its language but what they did understand seemed completely foreign, absurd and boring to them . That is why during the Liturgy, the students gathered at the back of the church and talked to each other as if nothing was happening. And since there were no lines, so that the accompanying professor could check who was speaking, since we were a crowd, the conversations sometimes sounded so loud that the priest stopped the Liturgy and told us that he would not continue until we were quiet. Of course, we didn't want that, because inside the church we felt like we were standing on hot coals and we were in a hurry for the Liturgy to end so we could leave. However, because after a temporary pause in the discussions and continuation of the Liturgy, the discussions started again, the priest in some phases "got it in the skull" and interrupted the Liturgy to tell us to "go to hell". I found this cursing in the middle of the hymns of the Divine Liturgy to be completely inappropriate.

One positive thing about our forced Christianity was that we were not forced to Confession. Confession took place in the church and anyone who wanted could confess. I remember my brother had once gone out of curiosity and what he had said to the confessor had seemed so interesting to him that he had asked him to discuss the "mystery" of Confession as well. I think I must have gone sometime, when I was in the first or second grade of high school, because I remember being on my knees with a petrachili (holy cloth) on my head and a priest standing over my head chanting something hurriedly. Everything must have been done in a hurry, because there might have been a line of students waiting to confess, and I don't remember what I said to the priest. All this took place in the basement of the church of Agios Georgios, which is next to Agia Paraskevi street in Chalandri, because while I was going to the sixth form high school, the ground floor of the church was under construction. It took 25 years since I finished high school for the ground floor of the church to be built and become operational. Certainly, a teenager going to church in the basement of a building under construction does not leave with memories of holy devoutness and he cannot take seriously, when he has grown up, church services that were held in such conditions.

Useless lessons and "bogeymen" in the form of Ancient Greek and Mathematics

In these camp conditions that I described above, a series of useless lessons were taught, for those who did not intend to later become the teachers themselves who taught them. The more useless ones had been made more difficult as well along with prioritizing them (ie if you failed the exam in them, you couldn't retake them before the start of the new school year like you could with the others); they forced you whether you wanted to or not, you were afraid of them. Fear them also for their difficulty and why you had to, if you didn't want to stay in the same class, be a good student in them. These most useless and most intimidating subjects were Ancient Greek and Mathematics. Even those who excelled in these subjects while in high school, like me who excelled in Ancient Greek until the sixth grade and math until the third grade (because later on I was only good at them), forgot them after high school, if they didn't study them at university, because they were completely useless to them. Other useless subjects were Religious Studies, for those who would not become priests, and Physics, like Chemistry, of the last classes, again for those who did not intend to become physicists or chemists. And these subjects had therefore been made extremely difficult and important, so that, whether you wanted it or not, you would struggle with them too and, if you did not intend to become a physicist or a chemist, you would hate them, like the Ancient Greek and the Mathematics. As such, the lessons I mentioned above are not difficult if one teaches them properly and does not ask too much of the students. Such as driving is also easy for a learner

car driver, after taking twenty or so lessons and driving in a country town as well. Driving is difficult if you ask him, after twenty driving lessons, to drive a bus at night in a chaotic megacity like Athens. To drive a bus, you need to learn to drive a bus with a teacher who knows how to drive a bus well. If you get to drive a bus at night in a city like Athens, after twenty car driving lessons, and many mistakes you will make and hate bus driving.

Unfortunately, the books with the courses I mentioned above were difficult to understand and repulsive, because those who wrote them did not have the necessary skills to make these courses understandable by the students, nor were the teachers who taught them interested in making them understandable to the students. They simply repeated the hard to understand, repulsive and boring things the books said and at the end they asked the students to ask what they didn't understand. They didn't care if, in order to ask something, someone must have familiarized himself with most of the knowledge contained in the book, because if he hasn't, he has nothing to ask. Just as one cannot, for example, ask how to translate a word written by an Arabic language teacher on the blackboard, if one does not know how to read Arabic in order to read it.

However, apart from the inappropriateness of the books and the incompetence and indifference of the teachers, the lesson became repulsive, because every day you were in danger of being lifted from the desk, of being shouted at next to the blackboard, which was colored green and you wrote there with chalk, and ask you to recite the lesson from memory or to translate some ancient Greek text or to solve exercises on the board. This form of examination was also the most torturous, because within a couple of minutes the professor would decide how much you know the subject and give you a grade. And this grade was included with the one he would give you after a written exam. In the written test, because you had time to think, they asked you even more difficult things for you.

Queuing for an exam, a student who was beaten up for saying he could part an angle in three, a student without notebooks and books and a lovely theologian!

In the first year of high school, I was placed in the second section of the class with about seventy other children. Because students were assigned to sections by last name and in alphabetical order, my section started with "Katsar-". The first on the list of students of the department were Katsarellis, Katsaros, Katsiadas, Kyritsis, Konstantinidis. I remember it like a poem, because the five of us were drawn as a group to the blackboard to be examined. And the exam was again in alphabetical order. So the first one was the most unlucky, because he had to say the lesson first and if he didn't know something the others corrected him, while if he knew it, the

others listened to him and were learning the lesson from him and, if they were not completely irrelevant, they repeated it. If he didn't know the lesson, someone else didn't come before him to listen and then say something. So, the last in line was also the luckiest. Because, not only until his turn came he had heard something from the others, but also because, by the time his turn came to be examined, the time had passed, and therefore, if he had time to be examined, he was asked to say very little things. And the better it was for the last or the ones before him, if it was longer the queue of examinees. For, indeed, the professors sometimes called a dozen or so to the blackboard for examination. Those who were towards the end of the queue, took advantage of the distance from the professor, to listen to their classmates at the front desks speaking in very low voice, what the book was writing about what the professor was asking. The joke was when a completely ignorant examinee heard wrong what was being said to him and said what he thought he had heard, which because it sounded like what he should have heard, the whole class understood that heard wrong and laughed. It would certainly not be a pleasant experience for the one who was laughed at. But the teachers also usually sought to ridicule the bad students and therefore asked them trap questions. The bad students fell into them, not knowing that they were traps, with the result that the whole class laughed at them afterwards. I laughed too, of course, because at the time I didn't see the malignancy that this whole process was hiding. I think I laughed the most in the second grade, when my classmate Prinos, one of the best students, to satisfy the mathematics teacher, Mr. Flessas, said that he had learned to solve a mathematical problem that was considered unsolvable, the trisection of the angle, if one tried to solve it with a ruler (ruler) and caliper. The mathematician called him to the blackboard and gave him a large wooden ruler, a large wooden caliper and a piece of chalk, to show us how he solved it. At the time when Prinos had drawn the angle and had drawn all three lines that trisected it, as he was looking at the greenboard, the mathematician came up behind him and smacked him, telling him that what he is doing was rubbish and showing him why. It is assumed that the mathematician's reaction was exaggerated because the student's claim was also exaggerated. But the student was fourteen years old and the teachers had stopped beating students many years ago.

And yet, despite the terror and ridicule the bad students endured, there were some who didn't give a damn. One such person was my classmate K. At some point, I remember, a professor had asked to see the notebook that K. used in a lesson. K. said he didn't have a notebook. Then the professor asked him to read from the book, about the topic the professor was asking him, but K. said he didn't have the book handy. Then the professor asked K. to open his bag and look inside to find it. K. replied that he had no bag. And when the teacher asked him about how he had come to school that day without a bag, K. replied that he always came like that!

With K., I think, I was sitting at the same desk. And that's why we became such friends that at some point I took him and we went together to a movie theater that was quite far from our high school and from our homes, "Havana", which is still standing today. We went and saw one of the nicest musicals I've ever seen: "Oliver" from 1968. On the way, as we were going back, we had found some dogs that after we approached them and played with them, when we decided to leave, they wanted to follow us. We had a difficult time till we escaped from them. It goes without saying that K. did not continue at the same school.

Of the teachers in the first grade of the high school, the most likeable was the theologian. The lesson he taught us was the Old Testament, which is full of independent stories, and the theologian, Mr. Mainas, had the gift of telling these stories so beautifully, that we were "hanging from his mouth". He was relatively short with a bald head and wore a beige trench coat. He had a very benevolent countenance, and made the lesson so attractive in his manner that the students stood still to listen to him. So he didn't have to shout at anyone. I don't remember him ever messing with any student. I also got 20 (excellent) in his course, because apart from being a good student, the course interested me because I was still a Christian. And when in the second grade we were asked to write an "ideas report" about the teacher we liked the most, I had written about Mr. Maina.

Unforgetable holidays in Vlach Metsovo when the first people walked on the moon, and my first contact with literature that demystifies institutions

It must have been the summer vacation after the first year of high school, when my family and I went on the second big trip of my life that I will never forget. We had gone to Metsovo, where my father's mother, Theodora, was from, whom I did not meet because she was killed by a bomb in 1941, as I have said before. It was July 1969, as I gather from the fact that in that July the first men walked on the moon. I remember that television had already appeared in Greece and that's why in a central cafe in Metsovo there was a black and white television (color ones appeared in Greece after many years), which broadcast the walk that the two American astronauts made on the moon. I don't remember if the broadcast was live or not, because there were so many people gathered in front of the TV that I saw little, if anything. For the whole world, at that time, the astronauts' walk on the moon was an impressive event that showed how far science and technology had progressed. The world, at that time, as it is today, hoped in science and technology, because it expected them to change its life for the better. As today, the world then could not think that states would continue to waste billions to satisfy the vanity of the rich and powerful, without concern for the fate of the majority of the inhabitants of the

planet, whose life would change for the better, if these billions went not to space programs, weapons and scientific research without practical benefit to the wider world, but to scientific and technological applications that improve human life. As the situation is today, so also then, access to most achievements of science and technology had only a small part of the planet's population, while there were billions of people who could not even secure the necessities of life, such as food, shelter and access in education and medical care, and therefore depended on the charity of rich states.

Metsovo will remain unforgettable for me for many reasons, among which the most important is that we stayed in a hotel that was then called "Xenia" and belonged to E.O.T. (National Tourism Organization), which seemed luxurious to me considering my life up to that point. We had taken a double room with a covered balcony, in which the hotelier added two beds and made the double room a quadruple. Me and my brother's beds were in the covered balcony. I spent several hours lying down, because at that time I was reading Tolstoy's masterpiece "The Resurrection" that I had bought from the carts at some festival of the church in the central square of Chalandrio. Unlike the books I had read up until then, it was the entire novel in the book and not an adaptation of it for children. It had impressed me, because from the first moment Tolstoy demystified the judges and their justice, presenting them in black colors, as they deserve. Until then, in the adaptations of classic novels that I had read, all institutions were presented in the most beautiful colors and therefore it had not crossed my childhood mind that judges or policemen could be insignificant little people whose power provided by the state makes them, not only seem important, but also dangerous for the poor and socially weak people. And beyond the sad premise of the novel which shows that people do not decide on their own lives but are the product of chance and social prejudices, with the result that one does harm to another, without wanting to, as the hero of the novel Neklyudov did to the heroine Maslova, I was also impressed by the descriptions of living conditions in prisons. Although it has been 46 years since I read this novel, I cannot forget the barrel, which was in the women's ward of the prison, where the women were forced to defecate, and which not only smelled awful but it was permanently overflowing. It seemed incredible to me that the prisoners could live under such conditions.

In addition to the hotel room, which seemed luxurious to me, I was also impressed by the hotel dining room. It was quite large and most of the tables were empty with the result that the restaurant staff treated us like royalty. As soon as we were seated around the table, the waiter would immediately come, sometimes together with the fat and tall cook, accompanied by Kostas, a little guy who worked as a waiter's

assistant the waiter's first order was: "Kostas: Cutlery." Because this phrase was ritualistically repeated every time we sat down to eat, it had impressed me and my brother and made us say it, when no one was listening, and laugh. It goes without saying that we were also impressed by the tablecloths, the cloth towels, the places for the cutlery, the bottles of oil and vinegar and in general, all these things that we had not seen before on the tables of the taverns in Chalandri that we used to go to. We were even impressed by the fact that we had to take a first and a second course each, something unknown in the taverns of Chalandri.

Something else unusual, to the teenage eyes of me and my brother, was the colorful traditional attire of women of a certain age. Never before had we seen women walking around in traditional clothing on the streets. Just as it was unusual for us the language these women spoke to each other but even men you saw speaking this language to each other. This language was Vlach, a foreign language to the Greek that we heard until then. Me and my brother, until then, had not left Greece and no one had spoken to us about the existence of ethnic minorities in this country. Even about the Turkish minority of Thrace we had no idea. Until then, my brother and I thought that only Greeks live permanently in this country and that the only language spoken was Greek.

My father is looking for the cemetery where his relatives should be buried, some inhospitable relatives and a tavern with a Vlach feast

When my father was little, he used to go with his brother and his mother to Metsovo by mule, from Trikala, for summer vacations. They needed several days to get from Trikala to Metsovo, but there they had relatives of his mother who hosted them.



Late 20s, early 30s. From left to right my father, his mother Theodora, an unknown girl and my father's brother Meltos (Miltiades)

Descendants of these relatives were sought by my father when we went to Metsovo in 1969. As well as a cemetery that he remembered existed somewhere on the outskirts of the city, in which relatives of his mother were buried. He didn't find a cemetery where he thought he would and we didn't go to any other cemeteries either. However, he found a family of descendants of those relatives and managed to receive us in their home for a visit. On this visit my father talked for some time with his distant relatives, but he was not pleased with them, as we learned when we left. He expected us to be detained or invited to dinner, as they were seeing us for the first time and would never see us again, while we were their relatives who had come from so far away. But they turned out to be stingy, like all Epirotians at that time. I didn't know any other stinginess than my father's, whose origin was from Epirus and knew a few words of Vlach, together with a couple of songs in that language. But I had heard that my father's mother was very stingy. Perhaps he had "inherited" stinginess from her. A stinginess that I will remember because of many incidents, including an episode that took place between me and my father, when I

was in the second year of high school and I had asked him ten drachmas to go to the "Havana" cinema in Chalandri. Although he didn't give me any money all week, and my mother gave me two or three drachmas for snacks at school, he wasn't available to give me ten drachmas to go to the cinema on a Sunday. It was the first and last time in my life that I asked him for money to go to the cinema and he didn't give it to me.



Metsovo end of July 1969 in front of the hotel. From left to right Mr. Giorgos Spanos with whose camera I took the photo, my brother, my father, my mother and Mrs. Eleni Spanos.

On the back of the photo you can see a covered balcony like the one in our room

Another thing I remember from Metsovo in 1969, apart from the fact that in the evening we had to wear a blouse to go out, even though it was hot summer, is a tavern we had visited as a family. There must have been a festival in town, because the tavern was full of people and had live music. Folk songs, of course. We had barely found a table and even then we were very cramped. The orchestra that played folk songs was in the next room and therefore we could not see anything. We only listened to the music. I, if I remember correctly, had a feeling of insecurity while I was in this tavern because this tavern also had a covered balcony, if I remember correctly, and our table was in this balcony. There was a cliff under the balcony and I was afraid that the weight of the many tables with people on the balcony would cause the wooden floor to give way and cause us to fall over the cliff. I don't think we stayed long in this tavern. We had only eaten roast meat and after my father had drunk half a kilo or more of wine we left and returned to the hotel. During this phase when we were in Metsovo, we might have gone to an open-air festival of some church that was celebrating, because I remember that we laid down

And we eat down on the ground, like many other families, while some danced away from us. But I'm not sure. This had happened once too, but I don't remember when.



Another photo from Metsovo in 1969. From left to right me, my mother, my father, Mrs. Eleni Spanos and Mr. Giorgos Spanos

Again bravado against me from a "two-year", a shoe that leaves with the ball, the American books and the Greek textbooks that were falling apart

After Metsovo, I went to the "second" grade of high school. From this class I remember two incidents that I think sum up the kind of student I was. The first is that I had a classmate, whose name I don't remember, who liked to tease me by calling me: "Savant". It bothered him that I was a good student and he was a mediocre one, and he thought that being a good student was something I should be ashamed of. That's why he called me savant to tease me. Of course, this is nothing compared to the bravado that another of my "two-year" classmates did to me, as they called those who came for the second year in the same class, because they had not passed the exams. His name was Bakis, from what I remember, and he was both older than me and a head or two taller than me. He stuck to me during the breaks until at some point we came to grips and I think he had given me a headlock, which was fashionable in the bravado that the stronger practices on the weaker. With me, however, Bakis was unlucky. He thought he wouldn't face consequences because I had no way to defend myself. He knew I could report him to a teacher, but the "culture" of the school considered it cowardly someone to defend himself with a

report, "nailing" as they called it back then, while it did not consider it cowardly for the stronger to quarrel with the weaker. Bakis got what he deserved, because I wrote on my old shoes this unjust culture and I denounced him to the most terrible teacher for the students: The mathematician Mr. Flessas. When he entered the classroom to teach us, I got up from the desk and went and told him that Bakis had hit me. Then he picked Baki up and asked him for an explanation. Bakis told him that he didn't do anything to me but a "so" and made a gesture with his hand. Then the professor, who was tall and bulky, got up from his chair and going in front of Bucky put his hand in his face and pushed him, saying: "Do you like to be treated like that"? Then he told him that if he teased me again he would crush him and since then Bakis didn't tease me again and I found my peace.

I was never a tomboy, so I usually stayed out of team games, like the basketball or volleyball my classmates played during gym class or the soccer they played when we went on a excursion to Gourounadika, an area of Chalandri that was close to the high school and was still unbuilt. Because in order to play in a team game, one had to fight the contenders, because in each class section there were dozens of us and the game teams could not include them all. Once, only, I remember playing football on an excursion to Gourounadika and this time I had the misfortune to kick the ball and my shoe came off and fell near the group of teachers who accompanied us, and they were sitting under a tree. When I went to get it past the professors what could have occurred to them, I was red with embarrassment. Another time I remember playing football with my classmates on an excursion during high school, but not in Gourounadika, and I remember this time because I had been hit in the face with a ball and my glasses were gone. Because, for the record, I've been nearsighted and wearing glasses since at least the sixth grade. However, I don't remember my glasses being broken at that stage. Anyway, my shoe was gone because I didn't wear sneakers and therefore didn't fit well on my foot for playing soccer and I was also nearsighted enough to not be able to play soccer without glasses. But these were not enough to stop me from being jealous of my classmates who played team games, while I stayed away from them. At least I had something to do when we went another time to Gourounadika. Together with a couple of my classmates, I left and went to a group of American schools, which was relatively close. We walked for some time to get there but managed to turn back before the excursion was over and we had to go back to school. We had been impressed by this school complex, because it was spacious, had nice little buildings, not shabby, like the massive three-story concrete building of our high school, and facilities with outdoor gymnastics equipment. It was not forbidden to enter the yard of the complex from what I remember and that is why we entered without anyone telling us anything. I think the yard also had trees,

something unusual for us as the yard of our own school only had concrete. What had made the most impression on me, at that time, were the textbooks that the students of the schools had. They were bulkier than ours, bound in hard colored paper, and filled with color photographs. You looked at them and envied them, because ours were small, with black-and-white photos, or blue, if they had photos, because most of them had nothing more than sketches, had a soft cover and shabby binding, to the extent that only a few weeks later at the beginning of the school year, their binding would tear in various places on their spines and various pages would peel off and go. I, in addition to stiffening the covers of my books, coating them with transparent adhesive, in the larger classes I made holes near the top and bottom of the spine and passed through them hard wire which made the spine unbreakable. I got the idea from a classmate of mine, Guvas, who was passing a rope through the holes. And to end my reference to the American schools complex, I want to say that I was very impressed by the library of the complex, which was housed in one of its beautiful one-story buildings. I had seen it looking through a window of the building. Until then I had not seen a building with only bookcases, because neither the High School of Chalandri had a room as library, nor did Chalandri had a library, nor had I ever visited the National Library or the Library of the Parliament. And, being an avid bibliophile, I was impressed to see an entire building full of books.

The best composition in favor of the "Revolution of the 21st April 1967"

From the second grade of high school I have other memories, besides unpleasant ones. In the second year of high school, I wrote the best essay in favor of the fascist military dictatorship we had at the time, which billed itself as the "Revolution of the 21st of April". At that time, no one opened my eyes and I was a victim of state propaganda. My composition was so fanatically in favor of the military dictatorship that the professor, the philologist, who had made us write it at home, asked me if I had not written it myself. Even he himself, who was a lover of antiquity and purist, could not imagine how persuasive the state propaganda was! And I had a special sympathy for this professor, Mr. Betsis, because at that time I was also a purist in language, namely I used to write in the purist Greek, in addition to memorizing the passages from the Ancient Greek books that he asked us to do. I was so fanatically purist that even a diary that I started keeping then, I wrote in that language. I also liked this professor, because, in contrast to the mathematician Mr. Flessas, he was very mild and kind to the students, which, together with his small stature, made some students who pretended being bullies, make a fuss in the class, so that he couldn't teach.

At the time I had no idea how useless the Ancient Greek class was, even though it ate up most of my time at home doing the homework Betsis asked us to do.

My first "office" in my grandfather's room, the prefa and the "inappropriate for minors' movies

At that time, namely 1969-1970, because I didn't have my own room in my house to do my school lessons, I moved a folding table into the living room which used to be closed on non-holidays but now it was open every day, because my grandfather Philippas, who had finally left the psychiatric hospital for good, had settled there. He could not live with his wife, my grandmother, since because of his violent behavior towards her he had been locked up in a mental hospital, but neither his children offered to take him home, except for his eldest daughter, my mother. My father, for humanitarian reasons, had agreed to take him home, something which had also increased his prestige among his relatives.

Spending hours every day in my grandfather's room, and being the only one of his grandchildren to be named after him, I soon attracted his interest and love. He was then 72 years old, walking with a cane, taking a daily combination of heavy psychoactive drugs, including Largactil (Chloropromazine), Luminal (addictive barbiturate) and Aloperidin, which made him, like it or not, a "lamb". He had nothing to do with the man who used to be so maladjusted that he had been locked up in a mental institution. Every day he left home and went and sat in the shop of his little son, Christos, who sold irons. He would sit for some hours at the nearest coffee shop in Dourou Square and come home. At home, to pass the time, he listened to a small Sanyo transistor that he had from the time he was in the clinic. And if I had time we would play cards together, prefa. He taught me the prefa and I have only played it with him while he was alive. After his death, although it was a very nice game, I never played it again and therefore forgot how to play it. We had also gone to the cinema together a few times. In addition to the cinema "Athina", where we had seen "The Uprooted Generation" together, we also went to the cinema "Titania" which, as I mentioned, was opposite my house. For "Titania" I remember we went once with my grandfather but they didn't let me in, no matter how much my grandfather begged them, because the play was "Not suitable for minors". Those under the age of seventeen were considered minors for the cinema. Usually, the state characterized police films as unsuitable for minors, as well as those that had even the slightest connection with sex.



My grandfather by the door of his youngest son's shop selling irons. To his right is his cane.

A Christian trying to make his grandfather a Christian and a grandfather who saw the atheist Bolsheviks as Christians!

At some point, although he was not a "man of reading", my grandfather asked me to give him some books to read. And I, being still a Christian, had given him the New Testament translated by Trembellas. Curiously, he started reading it and the fact that he never read it before piqued his curiosity. He liked what he read, because it presented him with a religion close to man and not as he had known it until then from the priests, about whom he had the worst idea. In fact, from what he had told me, he believed that Christian teaching supported communism. He had such a good idea about communism, even though he had the opportunity to stay in Lenin's communist Russia when he was young. But afterwards he preferred to follow the other Greek-speaking Christians who, after the reoccupation of the Kars region by the Ottoman Empire, reoccupation which followed Russia's peace treaty with Germany and its allies, preferred to come as refugees to Greece, rather than stay in Russia, where they had taken temporary refuge. Reading the Gospels, my grandfather used to say that he had made a mistake to leave communist Russia and come as a refugee to Greece, because he thought that the communism of Russia was carrying out the preaching of the Gospels!!!

I, at that time, was such a Christian that, apart from recommending the New Testament for reading, I had visited the main church of Chalandri, Agios Nikolaos, a few times to attend the Sunday Divine Liturgy and had spent a whole Holy Week going every evening in the same church. I had also bought a Synopsis so that I can

read what the priest said during the Liturgy and understand it. Of course I understood very few things. The peak of my religiousness came one day when in the house and specifically in my father's room, when he was away, I prayed! It was the first and last time, because I didn't feel like anyone was listening to me and I started to understand that I was kidding myself. In fact, I tried to see how others dealt with this issue, such as my friend Maria, the daughter of Giannis Intzirtzoglou, whom I had asked if she was praying. She had replied that she was praying and when I had asked her why she was praying, since there was no god to hear prayer, she had told me that when she prayed she felt that God was listening to her!

A year later, at the age of fifteen, I had ceased to be a Christian after a process that I will describe below. For now I want to continue about my grandfather.

An ordinary death of a tortured man: The death of my grandfather

My grandfather, as I have said, had fallen from the construction site he was working on and had broken both of his legs. The same thing happened one day to the tenant of the back basement of the building that was our house, a father of two children, who also supported his parents who lived with him. The Provata family had meanwhile left, in the early 70s. It had been several years since my grandfather's accident and his legs had healed, but the injury had affected them so that they hurt when there was moisture in the air. That is why my grandfather, because of his pains, could foresee the coming of rain. My grandfather did not complain of other pains, but lately he had been experiencing stomach pains, which he treated by drinking linden. But there came a day when my grandfather told me that he would not live till the end of the month, because he would die. Of course I did not believe him, because I did not believe that my grandfather was a prophet nor had the doctors told him anything. And yet, this month, one day my grandfather was taken to the hospital, I think Hippocrateio, to have a cavity operation. It was 1970, probably June. That day I had afternoon school and I remember being scared. I had never heard of surgery in the family and I was afraid of surgery. All the hours I stayed at school, the music of a then-famous foreign song, "Betty Blue", was playing in my head. When I got home I learned that my grandfather had died. His funeral, which took place the other day, was the first funeral I went to in my life. When they opened the lid of the coffin, as they always do before lowering the coffin into the grave, I saw flies sitting on the corpse's face. This was the first image of a human corpse I had ever seen in my life and I remember having the feeling that my grandfather was somewhere alive and I could communicate my thoughts with him. I was so influenced by his soul tales of Christianity. Nevertheless, that same night I left the

room of my house, where for so many years I slept together with my brother, and slept in my grandfather's bed. Although I can't say that I didn't feel any fear, what bothered me the most is the thin mattress of the bed which, being a sofa bed, made my sleep quite uncomfortable. Fortunately they quickly bought me a thick foam mattress so I continued to sleep in this bed for the next seven years. I had finally acquired, at the age of fourteen, my own room!

The school of English and its class' parties, where I danced with a girl for the first time

Something worth mentioning about the time I was in the second year of high school is the school of English . My father, after two years of private lessons with Mrs. Teta, had enrolled me and my brother in an English tutoring school, where we went three times a week for three years. I think I was in the second year of high school, namely the second year at the tutoring school, when Mr. Alexandros Hieromnimon came to teach us. He had recently come from America and that is why his relationship with the students of his class was very liberal. He wanted us to have fun at the tutoring school and not just to do a lesson. That's why he organized parties both at the school and at his home for his students. The music heared at these parties was rock music, because this was the only music that young people in Athens listened to and danced to. Though they used to listen to light folk songs, no one danced with them. At one such party, at the tutoring school, I danced for the first time in my life with a woman. We only danced the blues and the shakes. Only the blues were danced by couples. So I found myself dancing with a classmate without her being the girl I liked. Others were dancing with the girl I liked, as always happened at the parties I went to in my life. I had also danced with her at the party organized by Mr. Hieromnimon at his house in Glyfada or Voula (I don't remember exactly). At this party, apart from the house, which was a beautiful detached house with a garden, I was impressed by the parents of Mr. Hieromnimon, because they wore name tags on their lapels, as if they were delegates at a conference or doctors at a hospital. But most of all I was impressed by the library. It had books with colorful bindings, like Spike's, our relative from America, but in this case I was able to browse the books. And I remember that some of them were beautiful by the standards of the time in Greece. Of course they weren't Greek. I characteristically remember the series of Time-Life editions with the various countries. Each book was filled with color photos of each country's most beautiful sights. In Greece, at that time, printing technology had not yet reached the level of making such beautiful books. Of course, I was the only one of the

participants in the party who dealt with the library. Hieromnimon also noticed this and told it to me. Though, as he said, he was expecting me to be flirting the girls. He had not understood that the Greece of the dictatorship was not the America of the 60s and early 70s, where he had come from, and I still had not felt the absence of the woman from my life.

How I stopped being a Christian

The following year in high school, namely the year I was in the third year of high school, was the year I stopped being a Christian for good, without that meaning that at that time I knew how many, incredibly cruel and sadistic, crimes this religion had done. Being this matter very serious for me, because I had seriously believed in this religion and did not limit myself to simply doing what others did, before I "divorced" Christianity I had studied some of its key texts, such as Genesis of the Old Testament and the 4 Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament. When I say "studied", I mean that I had also taken notes of the most important points and had not limited myself to a simple reading. I had also completed a series of 10 correspondence courses on the Bible, which were provided free of charge by an evangelical (Protestant) religious organization called the Church of Christ. I had also been to a couple of her religious ceremonies. I had also subscribed to a magazine published by the most important evangelical (Protestant) publishing house. From this publishing house I had taken the book that was for me the last Christian book, in which I looked for answers to my questions. I had realized that Christianity does not go hand in hand with science and that is why I had picked up a book of Christian scientists' answering to the questions posed by science. Although these scientists were American, consequently trying to scientifically document their answers to the scientific questions unanswered by Christianity, they could not make "the white black", no matter how hard they tried. For me the most important question then was of a moral nature. I was looking for an answer as to why there is so much evil in the world and so many people are unjustly tortured, when the God of the Christians could have prevented this as almighty as he was. I could not find a convincing answer from Christians, because, after all, there is no such answer. Some years later, reading the book "The Gods are Thirsty" by Anatole France, I found that my own question had been an "Achilles heel" for Christianity for hundreds of years. In this book the question is formulated as follows: God is all-powerful and all-good. If he is all-powerful and does not stop the evil in the world, he is not all-good. If he is all-good and does not stop evil in the world, he is not all-powerful. If he is both all-good and all-powerful, then why doesn't evil stop?

But beyond my theoretical searches, that period, when I was still a Christian, also had another side: I hung out with Christians and went to their events. Specifically, when I was in the third year of high school, I started going, for the first and last time in my life, to a catechetical school. Not that suddenly "God enlightened me" and I decided to do something that I didn't do in previous years. I just learned that there was a catechetical school, in which the lessons were taught by my favorite teacher: The theologian Mr. Mainas. I learned it from a classmate of mine, Giannis Argyris, who was also my best friend among my classmates. And I think we also went to catechism together. The lessons were held inside the church of Agios Athanasios in Polydroso of Chalandri every Sunday, if I'm not mistaken. They started with a religious song and ended with a prayer. Each time the catechist also handed out paper icons, i.e. pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or the saints, and sometimes colored pictures with moral themes. Of these, I will never forget a painting that depicted two roads: One was an uphill path going up a mountain, and the other was a boulevard, lined with canopies, on which there were beautiful girls playing musical instruments. The path corresponded to the road of virtue and the avenue to the road of vice. Now that I think about this, after about 45 years, I think that I have taken the path of virtue in my life. That's why I missed women! We laugh here!

In addition to the catechetical, at that time I found a Christian organization, which had its own space in Chalandri, where I began to frequent. It was called "Christian Student Groups" and it also organized Christian courses and excursions. The one who gave the lessons was a very nice young man, whose name I have completely forgotten. On the contrary, I remember the name of the most diligent student of the courses: He was called Meletis, which in Greek means study! I only went on one excursion with this organization. We went to the forest of Kareas, taking a bus next to the Propylaea of the University of Athens, because that was where their starting point was then. In the forest, I remember, they had shown us things that they learn in Boy Scouts and we had also played a team game, like the ones Boy Scouts play, I guess. Although on such excursions the children usually sought to consolidate friendships with each other, I had not managed to make any friends, much less a girlfriend, since there were also girls in the group lessons and on the excursion, which was not the case with the excursions of the High School for males I attended.

Two students who were expelled from all the high schools in the country, again a fight with another bully from my class and a composition in the purist Greek

I don't remember which grade of high school I was in, however, certainly in the first grades, when at some point, after the national anthem and the prayer, the high school principal announced that two students, of whom I only remember the name

of one: Rosinos, had been expelled from the high school forever and they wouldn't be able to go to any other high school in the country because they had broken into the teachers' office and burned some documents. This was also the only "expulsion from all high schools in the country" I heard while I was in high school. Also, in the third year of high school I had a fight with a two- years classmate who sweared at me, Liosatos. Because he was limited to words and did not proceed with movements, I put up with him until almost the end of the year although I had to bear him every day, since he sat in front of me. But in the end I couldn't stand it and we came to grips. I don't remember if I broke my glasses at that point. But I usually used to break them when I came to grips with someone.

The good side of the third year in high school was that I had a literature teacher that I really liked, Mrs. Kargadou. At some point she had to defend me in front of my classmates, because I also wrote the essays in the purist language, something they found out when once Kargadou called me to the blackboard to read my composition, since she thought it was better than the others. She had already excused me, in an obvious mistake of mine, which was caught by my classmates while I was reading the report: Speaking of school life, I had written that every morning, before we enter the classrooms, a pernicious prayer is raised from the school yard! Unfortunately, I was never given the opportunity to see Mrs. Kargadou in a more human phase, i.e. beyond the professor's chair. The only opportunity for such a thing was to accompany us on some distant excursion. That is why, when we were planning such an excursion, I had asked her to accompany us. But she refused, telling me that she was pregnant. I don't remember if I knew the expression she used to tell me that: I am in an interesting (situation). She certainly wasn't pregnant with her first child though, because I remember she once brought two other children to high school.

Kymi thermal water, lobsters, Phytology, Zoology and English

In the summer, after I finished the third year of high school, we went on family vacation to Kymi in Evia, specifically to its port. We had been there the previous summer and we went the next too, but the next one was not in the port but in the city which was higher up. My father chose this place for vacation because outside the city there was a spring with supposedly thermal water. And my father wanted this for my mother, who had a problem with one of her kidneys. At that time, my mother suffered, from time to time, from colicky pains in the kidney and had learned, after the relevant tests, that her kidney was underfunctioning. Her doctors recommended that if she wanted to get rid of colic, she should take it out. In fact, they threatened her that, because all the burden of blood purification fell on the other, the healthy one, it was also in danger of breaking down and leaving my mother without kidneys. But my father was always against operations, starting with the operation that the military doctors wanted to do when he was wounded in the leg in Albania. By then they threatened him that if he didn't have an operation

he would get gangrene and die. He didn't do it and he didn't die and that's probably why he stopped taking doctors' unsubstantiated predictions very seriously. On the other hand, he didn't want it to weigh on his conscience, it seems, if my mother really was losing both of her kidneys, and therefore, to convince himself that he was doing his best to prevent such a thing from happening, for three years, every summer we went to Kymi, so that my mother could drink the thermal water.

The previous summer we had stayed in a hotel on the beach, of someone called Beys. At that time I ate the most fresh lobster in my life in the hotel restaurant. It must have been relatively cheap, because my father was quite stingy and I don't think he would waste money on lobster if the lobster was very expensive. At the time I didn't know how expensive a luxury item lobster is and I wasn't impressed. Just as I was not impressed by the baths in the sea, of which I had done very little, when we stayed in that hotel. Most of the time I locked myself in the hotel room and read. First of all, I was reading Phytology and Zoology, as were the names of two high school books I had brought with me. I really liked these lessons but in high school, from the books of Phytology and Zoology, we were taught only a few pages. I, with the stubbornness that distinguished me since then, had decided to read the entire books. And since the ones we had been given at school for free, like all school books, were in bad shape at the end of the school year, because they had soft covers and bad binding and fell apart from frequent use, I had bought new books from the bookstore. These were hardcover and did not dissolve. Eventually, I read both books in their entirety, kept them in excellent condition, and still have them as keepsakes. From that time my strong interest in Biology had started, which accompanied me throughout my life and led me to read quite a lot, compared to the average reader, of Biology books. Since then Biology had become my favorite science.

Besides Phytology and Zoology, in the hotel that year (the summer between second and third grade of the high school) I also read simplified English books. I remember reading around ten that summer. They were classic novels adapted and abridged so that one could read them if one knew at least the 1500 basic, according to the publishers of these books, words of the English language. In fact, during the time I was in this hotel, I had tried to write a novel in English. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough confidence in myself or anyone to encourage me, so after the first ten pages I gave up. But I never stopped reading English books. In those years I read simplified, but later I read normal. Perhaps this helped me to feel less captive to this country than the majority of my compatriots. At least those who have never lived in an English-speaking country or studied in an English-speaking country so that they know English well.

The rooftop chase, my first fishing and swimming around the rusty pillars

As I said above, I also spent the summer between the third and fourth year of high school in Kymi. But we didn't stay in a hotel but in rented rooms. We also had the Intzirtzoglou family with us, except for the grandmother. We lived in a house with three bedrooms, of which each family had rented one and the owner of the house together with his own lived in the third. I remember this family had a son around the age of me and my brother, so we sometimes played together. One of the games was chasing, which we played on the roof of the house, because it was flat without tiles. It didn't even have railings, but it had the roof of another house next to it, the same height also flat, and the adjacent roof was separated from ours by a gap of less than a meter, so when we played, we used to jump over the gap. That's when I almost fell off the roof and lost my life at the age of fifteen. But not by falling from the staircase I mentioned earlier. I almost fell from another edge of the roof, going back without looking behind me. When I stepped into the air, instead of falling backwards from above and breaking my head, I instinctively made a quick spin around the axis of my body and landed on the edge of the roof. That's how I lived and am able to describe that time now.

With the kid of the family, we didn't just play chase. He had tried to teach me to fish and I caught a small fish as well. But I didn't know what to do with it and, after it had died, I threw it back into the sea. And besides fishing for the first time, with that kid I had, for the first time in my life, entered a boat. He rowed, although he had no problem with me leaving me pull the oars. I had tried to row but it seemed very difficult for me.

Besides playing, when I wasn't staying in the room, where I was studying as I'll explain below, I also took a few baths. The sea near the house where we lived was not good, for it had mud at the bottom, and into the sea ended a system of conveying ore to ships, consisting of huge iron posts and wire ropes, from which, in the past, the wagon would be hung. I say in the past, because by then the mine had been abandoned and the pillars were rusted. We bathed near the rusty pillars. At one point when I was bathing in this miserable sea together with my mother, Mrs. Giorgia and her daughter Maria, without understanding why, Mrs. Giorgia suffered something like a nervous breakdown and came out of the sea. I learned that, while they were in the sea, talking with my mother, they had had a fight, and she had a bout. I remember her coming home, sitting half-passed out in a chair, and us huddled around her, not knowing what to do. It must have been the first time in my life I've ever seen a nervous breakdown. I never found out what my mother had said to her so hard that she had the bout. In general, however, my mother was a sharp person and I, unfortunately, resembled her quite a bit.

The study to realize my father's dream and a tavern owner who lived with his family in a building site

As I said before, I was not only vacationing in that house but staying in our room and studying. I had taken the Physics book of the third grade of the high school with me and I was studying it again, also solving the exercises. Not that I was particularly interested in Physics. I was studying Physics because next school year I had to choose a relevant field. Back then, from the fourth year of high school, two directions started: The "practical", with a lot of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, and the "classical" with a lot of Ancient Greek and Latin. My father wanted me to go to the "practical", to prepare to take exams for the Polytechnic (the National Technical University), when I would finish the six-form high school. I too had considered it good to prepare well to go to the "practical". My father's dream, since he saw me as a good student, was to go to the National Technical University of Athens and study mechanical and electrical engineering, in order to expand his factory, from a technical point of view, i.e. to equip it with new machines that I would maintain like an engineer. I, like all children who go to Greek public schools, had not developed an interest in any particular job, so I let my father guide me. As it is now, so was then. For high school teachers to be concerned with discovering the particular inclinations of students and guiding them to make use of those inclinations was a luxury, and none of them did it. If they did, they would have discovered my interest in nature that made me study Phytology and Zoology. In fact, at that time, a ten-volume work called "The Wonderful World of Animals" was published every week, and I used to get those issues. For the time of "The Wonderful World of Animals" it was a very beautiful book from an aesthetic point of view, because it was full of color photographs, something unusual for the Greek standards of that time. I, in the end, managed to complete and bind all ten volumes and a volume that came out later, "The Wonderful World of Plants". I never read those books though. As I will mention in the sequel of my story, I sold them when at some point I urgently needed money.

One last memory from that summer worth mentioning concerns a tavern where we usually ate. The tavern had nothing special, apart from a jukebox, but the tavern keeper and his family were of particular interest. The tavern keeper, then, was the one who had worked as a waiter at Beys' hotel the previous year. Then he was running up and down, because he was alone and they were calling him from all the tables in the hotel restaurant, which, due to summer, was usually full. Now he had opened a tavern himself in a three-story building site where the ground floor was the tavern and the rest of the floors were still in construction. He and his family, who all day helped in the tavern, slept on the first floor that was only cement and pillars.

It had made a great impression on me, then, that I was watching people to live in such bad conditions. That's why I still remember it. I could not, then, imagine that the time would come when I too would live in a building site, in summer of course. And that the building sites were and will always be the refuge of the homeless, when there are, of course, no workers to work on them or neighbors to chase them.

The "Practical", the "failure" in Geometry and the end of my father's dream

The following school year, as my father wanted, I enrolled in the "practical". And as a "conscientious" student I "was torn away" in reading to succeed in the lessons. It goes without saying that most of the lessons were not difficult. The only difficult ones were Mathematics and Physics. Mathematics, which at that time was divided into algebra, geometry and trigonometry, was a real mess. Especially geometry. And the books were out of date, with the result that all the students bought "lysaria", namely books with solutions to the exercises in the textbooks, and the teacher, although quiet and kind as a person, was unable even to teach the children the books of Mathematics and unable to understand his students' level. It was the first year that this professor taught at our high school, so he was in "black midnight" in terms of knowledge of our level. The result was that he put us through the geometry exams of the first semester (it was four months in fact), some subjects so difficult that the whole class (the practical) fell below the base, except for the best student of the high school, Adamopoulos who got the base and an Augeris who had come to our high school for the first time that year, and he also got the base. Augeris had come from the high school of Aghii Anargyri, I remember. I don't know what later became of this "mathematical genius".

It is possible that students who fell short like me in Geometry, in the other math subjects, like algebra and trigonometry, did well, like me, because the mathematician put us through easy, and continued their studies in "practical". But I, after this resounding failure, which followed the most time-consuming preparation till that point in my life, I realized that I "don't get" Mathematics and decided to change direction the following year. I didn't think, of course, that the books and the mathematician were to blame. I put all the blame on myself and, seeing that I was not succeeding, no matter how much I study, I felt that I was wasting my time by trying to learn the difficult Maths that the "practical" required you to know, and hope to get into the Polytechnic. I had done everything I could and it "hadn't worked out for me". Thus, ignominiously and prematurely, my career in science ended and my father's dream was never realized. I didn't regret not continuing in the "practical". I didn't regret it, because the Mathematics they made the children learn in the "practical" was a torture. I had no appetite for torture either.

I had already done my best and the mere idea that, in order to do well in the "practical", I should spend all my hours and all my days reading Maths, made me fall in despair. From that time I had already become interested in what was happening in society and to spend my adolescence only reading Mathematics, I saw it as an absurd asceticism. In fact, that year was when I heard, for the first time, about communism from a classmate of mine who was a few years older than all of us, because, before he came to find us that year at the high school of Chalandri, he worked on ships, having previously just finished the third year of high school.

From a supporter of the dictatorship, becoming Marxist!

The former French president Clemenceau once said that anyone in their twenties who is not an anarchist is an idiot. He probably recognized how intelligent it is, when someone is very young, to see the evils of society and want to change it radically. In short, one must be a fool if, even at such a young age, he does not want to do something to fundamentally change society. He may not, as is usually the case, do many things, but the mere fact that as an anarchist he can distinguish right from wrong is a sign of intelligence, just as intelligent is not someone who sits idly by, but someone who try to change, as much as he can, the wrong things in his social environment. Let's put it another way: It is a sign of stupidity, when one is at the beginning of one's life, without the disappointments and compromises that the passing of years brings, not to see the wrong things and not do something to change them.

At the age of 16, I was obviously not an idiot and, with the help of the Russian social novels I had read, I could see how much misery, injustice and absurdity there was in the society in which I lived. That's why I was looking for a solution. My faith in the propaganda of the military dictatorship, which I received from the television broadcasts of its theoretician Giorgos Georgalas, had now been irreparably shaken and my hope that God would help the situation was also a thing of the past. So I was open to ideas that were new to me, such as Marxism and its propaganda for a communist society where there would be neither misery nor injustice nor absurdity. And my classmate Vangelis, who even sat in front or behind my desk, was the right person at that time to "introduce" me to communist ideas. I say the right man, because he was a model Marxist propagandist. That is, he had ready in his mind a set of problems that characterized social, economic, and political reality, and he also had the solutions to these problems. And his greatest asset was the confidence, mixed with smugness, with which he spoke. Because in such cases, i.e. facing people who are looking without having the breadth of knowledge and experience that the passing of years brings with it, the propagandist must appear

absolutely sure of what he says. If he shows the slightest doubt or wavering, his hearer will not be able to grasp the complexity of the problems which causes the doubt and wavering, and will think that the problem lies in the proposed solutions. This leads to the failure of propaganda to become persuasive.

My classmate Vangelis, himself an exemplar of the model he was propagating, namely the worker revolutionary communist, was extremely convincing. Even in appearance he fit the bill as he was tanned, muscular and with a well-groomed moustache. How much more impressive he was when, in the style of a connoisseur of a sought-after but forbidden truth, such as the communist ideology during the fascist military dictatorship of 1967-1974, he threw out names and terms that were either completely unknown to me or that I knew were forbidden. From Vangelis e.g. I heard for the first time about Varnalis and Ritsos. And how did I hear? I heard that they are the only ones worthy, while the rest, the ones we were taught at school, were second-rate or completely to be thrown away. Vangelis was also the first to tell me about Lenin and perhaps the first to tell me about Marx and Engels. He must also have told me about the Marxist method of analyzing history, historical materialism, as well as dialectical materialism. I will never forget his smugness when he spoke to me, and the slightly wry smile with which he met my objections. But, be that as it may, because of him I started reading books that I would never have read if he hadn't told me about them. Maybe I would read them later, when I was older, but not at the time. I particularly remember Max Nordau's "Conventional Lies" and Marx's "The Accumulation of Capital". In fact, this last one, which is an excerpt from the first volume of Marx's "Capital", was given to me by my uncle Tasos, my mother's older brother, in the first post-war edition, taking it out of a trunk. My uncle had also given me a series of leaflets he had cut out of newspapers, which had the title "From the mud to the stars and from the stars to the mud" and referred to the life of the ancient Greek general Alcibiades. They were written by Varnalis. He had also taken these out of the old trunk from which he had also taken Marx's book. Finally, I heard from Vangelis, also for the first time, that Kazantzakis, whose name I had heard somewhere, was a great writer and at some point he was also a communist. At school we were never told anything about Kazantzakis.

Targeted again by a bully dude, "Bobos" this time

As you might expect, in the fourth year of high school I was not only concerned with classes and politics. I was also concerned with the bullying, or rather the bravado, of the physically stronger ones towards me, not to mention towards others, because I don't remember specific incidents now. In the fourth grade of high school the bully who used to challenge me was a very fat and very foul-mouthed man nicknamed

Bobos. He must also have been the most vulgar of my classmates that I had heard up to that point. It gives me the impression that I have already forgotten his name, just as I have forgotten the name of another thug who used to challenge me in primary school. This is probably because 43 years have passed since then.

Bobos, therefore, was happy to curse me and provoke me for no reason, as too many Greeks do with immigrants today. I, as usual, was afraid to resort to violence. But he was so defiant that on a school trip to Nafplion, at some point when he was cursing me, I challenged him to "fight". But he did not accept the challenge. At some other stage, as we were returning from school to our homes, he, me and other classmates, again cursed and provoked me, to the extent that I could not stand it and I punched him bruising his nose a little. When he tried to attack me, some of my other classmates, stronger than him, stopped him. But all the while as we continued on our way home, he challenged me to make an appointment to "clean up". I was afraid to fix it until we parted ways. But when I got home, I was so indignant that I decided to risk it, so I went out again and looked for him in the street, but he was gone. In the end, we never got "stuck". At school, I didn't challenge him to "clean up" but I didn't sit idly by either. I resorted to my brother who was two grades above me, namely on the sixth grade, and he was also a head taller than me, and I asked him to intervene. Indeed, from what he told me, at some break he caught Bobo and told him not to bother me again, because he would have to deal with him. I don't remember if Bobos bothered me again. I only know that the following year I changed direction, going from practical to classical, so I didn't have to tolerate him every day, being in the same classroom as him.

Kymi, Skyros and my first "romantic skirmishes"

That summer, between the fourth and fifth grade of high school, was the last time we went on vacation to Kymi, so that my mother could drink the thermal water. But we didn't stay on its beach but in the village, which is high up. We were staying in an old hotel room and my father was going to and from Athens in his car. In the evenings we sit in the square or take walks in the village which had many abandoned and half-demolished old houses. I never asked and never learned why so many houses were in this condition. What I remember most about that summer in Kymi is that my sexuality began to be felt. But I can't think of any reason why this might be. Nor did I, at the time, have any idea how to satisfy it. After all, anything related to love, at that time, was considered dirty and forbidden and no one talked about it. Thus, the need for love of the majority of young people was dissatisfied and only a

few, who were considered bums, talked about relationships with girls. I was one of those people whose erotic release was taken care of by nature with nocturnal dreams, without me doing anything about it. My love needs until then had not led me to fall in love. Such a thing would be infinitely more disturbing and perhaps torturous, for surely my love would remain unrequited. I didn't have the means to do anything to satisfy a love interest, even if it was reciprocated. Something improbable, because even for girls, at that time, love was kept a secret and dealing with it was considered dirt and vagrancy. It would be shameful for a girl to say that she has fallen in love or been in love, just as it is still shameful today for a girl to say that she has been a victim of forced prostitution, regardless of whether she was the victim of criminal activity and not the perpetrator. On the contrary, rapists, traffickers, pimps, pedophiles, etc., when they are with their friends or with people who are unable to react, they even brag about their criminal activity. Courts, on the other hand, very rarely send Greeks to prison for this type of criminal activity. At best, they send to prison any foreigner who is in the service of the Greeks.

That summer I also went to Skyros for the first and last time. The island of Skyros is close to Kymi, with the consequence that, already at that time, there was a boat going to Skyros from Kymi. I mention Skyros, because it made a big impression on me at the time. The houses, instead of having roofs or tiles, had roofs of Karystos slabs or cobbled earth and were built in steps and attached to each other from the base to the top of a hill, on which the city is built. Old men wore sandals with rubber soles made from car tires and there were still town criers there. I had never seen a town crier in my life. Overall, I enjoyed the trip to Skyros, maybe because I was older and my folks let me go where I wanted on my own, and I also had a good camera to take pictures. I've been taking photos since I was little, but I had a crappy camera. Now, I had a Russian one that my father had bought from an itinerant, who had gone and found him at the factory. From Skyros, the most interesting photos were the ones I took from the top of the hill, where the town is built. There was a monastery there, to the courtyard of which access was allowed. The view from up there was great but, in general, I've always liked high places, where you can see the world below you. Even today, I continue to visit the hilltops of Athens when I live there, and I even ask my friends to accompany me to those peaks instead of going to any other part of the city for entertainment.

A scubby tomcat, Koulis, and my first experience of wage labour

I don't remember exactly when, but I remember that around that time, the cat we had at home, Koulis, as my mother had named him, also died. We've had him for about ten years and lately he's been looking quite old from the fact that one of his eyes won't open properly and sometimes he peed in the house because he couldn't hold himself until we took him outside to pee. Cat litter did not exist in Greece at that time. This cat, however, did not experience the grooming that cats do today, i.e. vaccines, skin parasite medication, cat food, etc. But although the lack of vaccines and medical care cost him some minor skin problems, he was scratched, he was never neutered and he ate the rest of the food we ate, instead of canned food or kibble which is the most common cat food today. I don't remember there being canned cats or kibbles back then. In fact, my father, to show me how advanced science was at that time, said that the astronauts were fed pills. Who would have imagined then that the food of the astronauts, namely food pills, would one day become the most common food for dogs and cats, called "kibbles". On the other hand, the cat Koulis, because he was not sterilized, when it was the season when cats mate, he claimed neighborhood cats. Consequently he was obliged to fight with other cats and get minor injuries. I don't know if he would prefer to be neutered to avoid fighting. Finally, when at some point I found Koulis' hardened corpse in a neighboring yard, I was the one who dug a pit to put it in. Today, an entire apartment building has been built over the grave of the cat Koulis.



The only photo that exists of our cat Koulis. It is on the entrance porch of our house in
Dourou Square

I think that summer, between the fourth and fifth year of high school, was also the first one that I worked in my father's factory. Not that my father needed my work. I needed some pocket money, and my father had no objection to giving it to me if I did some work in his factory, as I suggested. And since he didn't have a specific job for me to do, my father made me collect the marbles that were scattered in various parts of the factory yard into a neat pile. And when I was finished he put me in and oiled a machine, which made marble sinks. My father had stopped using it, as well as the other machines, except for the slitter (crate) which rather rarely cut a marble. So he had me clean it with oil so it would be presentable to sell. And I actually cleaned it so well that he was able to sell it afterwards. That's how I secured payment for the first wage job I ever did. I was 16 years old then.

"Education is self-education"

The fifth year of high school was the only year that I didn't have a fight with a classmate, although I can't say that we didn't have assholes in class. Maybe this happened because I happened to have a bulky guy, Rovithis, with whom I also hung out during the breaks, at the same desk next to me. Just the idea that whoever messed with me would be dealing with him was enough to deter would-be thugs. I only remember that, at some point, I had to slap a classmate. I must have had a good reason because I was never a bully. Unfortunately I don't remember that reason. Otherwise, in the classical class of the fifth grade I was one of the best students, because the better than me had all gathered in the "practical". My poor father did not want me to go to the "classic", because, as I was a very good student, he wanted my abilities to be utilized by the study of a profitable science. But I insisted and because he needed to sign as my guardian to change department, he signed. In general, my father was not the unconvincing stubborn one who forcefully imposes his opinion. And for that, I can say, I had some freedom of movement. Not that this freedom was my father's choice. It's just that he had more pressing matters to attend to than dealing with me, as he had told me once when I was 15 at the dinner table and made me cry. However, that year in high school I realized how much better it is to learn something on your own, if possible, than to wait for it to be taught at school. I understood this, because in the summer, before I enrolled in the "classic", I had sat down and read Latin by myself, because in the "classic", from the fourth grade, they were taught Latin, which they were not taught in the "practical". A consequence of

my "self-education" was, by the time I finished high school, getting the grade of excellent in Latin.

"Self-education" was also the subject of one of the tirades we heard every day from our philology teacher, Mr. Stergiou. Stergiou, very short in a black suit usually, and black, or at least very dark, glasses, spent half of every hour of teaching he had to do in our department (the classical one), making speeches in which he accused us of a thousand and two things. Probably, many of them were true. One of them was the dependence, which we showed, on the professor in order to teach us some things. According to him, "education is self-education", as he typically told us. Another one I remember from him is "behind is the pear's tail" but I don't remember why he said it. I, then, as later, was careless in when and where I should say my opinions, with the consequence that one day I was terrified, when in the school yard I was talking to a classmate accusing Stergiou and suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. Turning around, I saw that the hand was Stergiou's! Fortunately, Stergiou pretended not to have heard, because otherwise I would have had a hard time with him. He had come to tell me that I passed the exams I took to go from "practical" to "classical". Because in addition to my guardian's signature, they also wanted me to take exams in two, if I remember correctly, subjects: Ancient Greek and Latin.

Stergiou must have been quite disliked. And in such cases, even during the military dictatorship, a professor could suffer various things from his students. Specifically, about Stergiou, a classmate of mine, who later became an orthopedic doctor, did the following: He secretly brought a radio tape recorder to school, without Stergiou noticing, and recorded one of the tirades that he often addressed to us. Later, on a school excursion by bus, he put the tape with Stergiou in the bus's cassette player, so that all the classmates could listen to it and laugh.

Another teacher, who I don't remember now, was attacked with eggs while he was leaving the school in his car. One, at least, of those who attacked him, was later caught by the police in a coffee shop in Chalandri, confessed his act and was punished with permanent expulsion from all high schools in Attica. This student was from our department and he had never struck me as a bully. I never learned the details of what had led him to his act, nor whether he subsequently went through a criminal court.

A philologist who married his student and a mathematician who brought a wife from Korea

The eggs in the car were nothing compared to the war of nerves that some students had waged, as I had heard, on another philology professor. They said

that the war had led the professor to the mental hospital for a short period of time. One of the pranks they had done to him was, during his lesson on the ground floor of the school, to throw in a dead snake through the window! And yet this professor, whom I also had as a philology teacher for at least a year, seemed quite likeable to me. But the subject he did, Ancient Greek, was extremely disliked. In short, he paid dearly for his position and not for his character. But if anyone should blame his position, it should not be him, because, as I had learned, he had married one of his students. That is, his position had secured him a woman much younger than him. At the time when this philologist was teaching Ancient Greek, we were taught Mathematics by a mathematician, the one I mentioned before as a reason for changing direction, who had found a woman to marry when he had gone to fight in the Korean War. He had returned from the war with a Korean woman, whom he had married. They must not have many years difference in age, because usually someone goes to war young. After all, we are talking about 1972-1974 and the Korean War had ended in 1953, namely about 20 years earlier. And the professor must not have been over fifty years old. However, me and my classmate who had played the prank on Stergiou with the radio tape recorder, had a good opinion of the philologist, about whom there was also a rumor that he had been in a psychiatric hospital. So good opinion that, when he was once hospitalized, we went and saw him at the hospital and, another time, we went and saw him at home. He was the only professor I ever visited.

Summer holidays at the sea without any sea bathing: "Les Misérables", the most widely read French "social" novel

The summer between fifth and sixth grade was also the last time I vacationed with my parents. We had been to Loutraki for about fifteen days, because the water of Loutraki also had the reputation of thermal water, so it was suitable for my mother to drink for therapeutic reasons. At that time there was no bottled water, as far as I remember. Later, Loutraki bottled water was the first, or one of the first, to hit the market. I, as usual, spent the holidays in the hotel room reading. I had picked up and was reading a complete translation of Hugo's massive well-known work "Les Misérables". I had read it again but in an adaptation for small children, when I was finishing primary school. I don't think I'd miss much if I didn't read it in its entirety. And in the adaptation there was the entire "script" of the novel. The tedious details of French history, for which Hugo, as a nationalist, had a weakness and was therefore willing to trouble the reader with them, had simply been omitted. Now, after many years since then, it amazes me how I found the appetite to spend my non-school days reading. But maybe I had nothing better to do. Friends, except one

my classmate, I didn't have, and above all I didn't have girlfriends. I had no money, no dreams, in short I had nothing interesting in my life, so rather than sit and do nothing or wander around aimlessly, I preferred to read. And I don't think that even today, kids in their late teens have, for the most part, any money or interests beyond their love pursuits, or at least pursuits, since today's schools are co-ed and love pursuits they are much easier than before. But even today, they are not easy for everyone and that is why most students spend their free time playing computer games. Fortunately, at that time, we didn't have computers to hang out on, and not read books.

A "distant lightning": Resistance to dictatorship and the days of rebellion of the Polytechnic

The school year that followed was not only my last in high school but also the last of the military dictatorship. Of course, I, as I believe and most of my classmates, "were just buying a farm" as they say, namely we had no idea what was going on behind the scenes of everyday life. At most we read in the newspapers about some trials of resistance fighters like Sayas and Manios who had put a bomb on the Truman's statue. But I don't think we high school seniors read newspapers. We watched TV and some lucky people even went to a party with rock music. I was not among them. My brother went but not often. That's why from that time I remember more the TV serials, which I used to watch, than the so-called news reports. And I watched quite a few serials on the black and white television we had bought. Color didn't exist then. In fact, my father also watched a lot of television in the early 70s, a time when most Greek homes had acquired television sets. He also heard some news from foreign radio stations, such as the BBC and Deutsche Velle, or from Moscow or Tirana, but this was only when there were rumors of something important happening in Greece and the army's censorship did not allow the newspapers to write about it. .

My brother, that year, had entered the Medical School of the University of Athens, so he had more direct experience of what was happening politically in the country. In particular, at some stage around the beginning of November, a group of fascists armed with improvised weapons attacked the students who were in the courtyard of the school and chased them. And of course, there was an uproar not only in the Medical School of Athens, it also existed in other schools that November. I "was somewhere else" then. I wasn't involved in politics, as I said before, and living in a suburb I didn't know what was going on in the center of Athens. The first time I heard that there was a commotion was from my mother on November 14th, a Wednesday. My mother had come down

to the center on business and to bring me a bound volume of five Physics textbooks, which I had left with a bookbinder to bind into one volume. She brought me the volume and told me that down in Athens there were commotions. I didn't pay attention then, but not even on Friday at school, when I heard two of my classmates asking in the classroom if there was a third person to come down to Athens with them. The next day, Saturday, the mathematician had warned us that we would write a rough exam in Trigonometry. That is why on that Friday I threw myself into reading Trigonometry and solving exercises, when my brother appeared in my room with a small transistor in his hand and told me to listen to the students who had gathered at the Polytechnic and had set up a radio station, the station of "the free struggling students, of free struggling Greeks". I listened a bit to their pleas for support and continued with solving the exercises. I must have been solving exercises late, because I remember that at some point I heard that the Polytechnic was besieged by tanks and also heard the announcer of its radio station addressing the soldiers and telling them brothers who will not hit their brothers students. Then I heard him sing the national anthem, and I must admit, it started to get on my nerves a little because of the obligation, all my years in high school, to listen to the anthem every day. He then interrupted, saying he would continue later but I waited in vain for the continuation. Then there were only metallic noises. I also fell asleep, being quite tired after so many Trigonometry exercises I had solved.

Next day I searched with the transistor for the Polytechnic station but did not find it. But I found another station, which was calling people to get down from the neighborhoods in the center of Athens, where the fight was going on. I don't remember if the man asking help said that the tanks were shooting at people. He was, however, talking about some other mass resistance actions that had taken place, such as occupations of some public buildings in the suburbs, perhaps in some part of southern Attica. I didn't think of going down, because I prioritized the trigonometry test. I had prepared well and was ready to go to school and take the exam. But my brother was nearer the reality and together with his older friend and neighbor Mimi decided to take the bus down. When they returned at noon, I learned that the bus did not go as far as Kaningos, where it normally stopped, but left them at Pedio tou Areos. From there they had tried to approach the Polytechnic but they had not succeeded, because it was surrounded by policemen, who had closed all the surrounding streets and did not let anyone approach. That day the newspapers had the front page of the tank that knocked down the main door of the Polytechnic. I remained in my own world and as if nothing had happened I went to high school to do normal classes. But the door of the high school was locked and outside, a short distance away, there were two police officers of the secret police who were watching. At that time, the secret policemen "could be recognized from a hundred kilometers away", because they had a characteristic outfit: Dark suit, black pointed

shoe, black sunglasses and age around forty. From these two, the one I saw often and had retained his features. I later learned that he was called Maragas (and not Marmagas, which might have suited him if we likened him to the Soviet Union's secret policemen, who were systematically denounced by the Cold War radio show "In the Spider's Web" with the characteristic opening line: Woe to whoever is caught in the invisible spider's web. The price of his carelessness is death. A slow, horrible, awful death. A death without justification).

That day with a message to the Greek people (the Macedonians and Turks, as well as the Vlachs, Arvanites, Gypsies and Jews living in this country, were never mentioned by the mass media and therefore I was unaware of their existence at the time), the President of the Republic, former colonel and master coup plotter Giorgos Papadopoulos, declared "martial law throughout the country", as they typically said at the time. Maybe we had a democracy before but neither I, nor any resident of this country, had taken it for granted. I, beginning to realize that something very important had happened, was consumed by curiosity to go down myself, to see what was happening with the Polytechnic. However, I had the bright idea to tell my mother too, who, of course, dissuaded me from her fear. Another day passed like this, Sunday, and on Monday, which we probably shouldn't have had school due to the events, my curiosity consumed me so much that I took a bus and went down to the center. The police were no longer besieging the Polytechnic and people could approach. I also approached and saw a picture of destruction, with the central iron door crushed and distorted by the tank and some people cleaning the place with water hoses. I found that I had arrived too late, which happened to me again, in my lifetime, with events taking place that could have been dangerous for me if I had been involved. I returned home with the feeling that, because of my delay, I had missed something very interesting. Later, while I was growing up, I felt that I had missed a unique opportunity to know something very important in my life, by not participating in the events of the Polytechnic.

Although life in the suburbs has its own slow and routine rhythm, just like life in the villages, and someone who lives in a suburb can hardly feel the hustle and bustle that takes place in the center of Athens... If there were not the newspapers and the M .M.E., suburbanites who don't go downtown for work, would feel about what happens downtown, what they feel about what happens in another country.

Our bosses continue "their violin": The new military coup of 25th November 1973

- The handwritten newspaper and the progressive professor with
master's degree in England Giorgos Giatromanolakis

After a week, on November 25, we were listening to folk songs on the state radio stations from the morning. Before they broke off and we heard a new army announcement, we knew there had been another coup. As in 1967, the folk songs, considered as genuine Greek songs, announced the assumption of the country's governance by the quintessentially patriotic institution, the army. This time, again "for the good of the country", the army had overthrown the previous government and had created a new one under Lieutenant General Phaidon Gyzikis, who was replacing the President of the Republic George Papadopoulos. Also, at the beginning of the announcement, the names of the chief of the General Staff of National Defense and the chiefs of the general staffs of the army, navy and air force were given. Of them I remember Bonanno (simply synonymous with the well-known Italian rebel anarchist) and Galazzano, perhaps because of the rhyme in their last names. Surprisingly for me, when my brother came to announce the new coup, I was overcome by my patriotic feeling and I started to sing "Pote tha kani xasteria?"(When will it be clear night?)! And as if that wasn't enough, on the night when traffic had been prohibited after "sunset" and there was a "deafening" silence, I had opened, even though it was cold November, the window of my room and had turned on a record player with speakers playing Beethoven's fifth symphony. I thought that this is how I do an act of resistance to the junta!

After these historic events, the school continued as normal, as if nothing had happened, and its students behaved as before. As for me, my mind was "starting to catch air" and I dreamed of fighting against the junta. So I began to keep a diary, in which I recorded in beautiful calligraphic letters my views on politics and social life and argued that the best way of life is the struggle for high ideals, etc.

Unfortunately, a few years later, this diary disappeared from my stuff. Maybe the police took it to find out how people think before they become "terrorists". Below, I will say why I say this. And when I was given the opportunity to participate in a handwritten newspaper of the class, made by my classmate who had recorded Stergiou, the philologist, I copied a poem from a literary magazine called "Continuity", which poem seemed to me that had a resistance message. It seems that this impression, the poem, gave not only to me, but also to the philologist who made us history, Mr. Giatromanolakis, when my classmate showed him this newspaper. And in fact, Mr. Giatromanolakis, who before coming to our school had obtained a Master's degree in England, was so clever that he also found out who had put the poem in the newspaper. To confirm his suspicions he asked me if it was mine. I proudly replied that I had put it but

I didn't write it. I told him I had copied it from a magazine. Mr. Giatromanolakis was intelligent and this was proven later, because he became a university professor. Mr. Giatromanolakis was also fashionable, as could be seen from his yellow car, which was a fashion brand, and from his relatively long hair, something unusual for teachers at our school. Mr. Giatromanolakis was also good, as was evident when he found out that I had mentioned him to the Religious Studies professor, as a professor who, instead of "delivering" the following lesson to us, had a student read it from the book and the others to listen. I say he was good, because when he called me to the bench to explain, and I told him I was just telling the truth, he didn't curse me like a "nail". He stoically accepted my explanation. At the time, I couldn't think of any other reason why he didn't teach the History class himself, other than that he did it out of laziness. Many years later, and after I learned that in schools the History books lie by making crude nationalist propaganda, I excused Giatromanolakis who had no desire to repeat the nationalist propaganda himself. This professor was a democrat. I confirmed this when, several years later, there was a question of reintroducing the useless ancient Greek course in school, which the PA.SO.K. (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) had abolished when it first came to power in 1981. I saw that Iatromanolakis (university professor then), although he was a philologist, condemned the reinstatement of the Ancient Greek's course on the grounds that the way it was taught in school was unsuitable for children to learn Ancient Greek.

The "mail" through a desk, Demi and the first beating I got for one woman

This was not the last time I created a problem for Mr. Giatromanolakis. The last time was when I came to blows with a classmate next to me, Sardis, who, although generally a good boy, was disturbed by the correspondence I had with a female student who sat in my seat at the desk when the school was operating as a "Girls' High School ». It wasn't exactly mail as we know it. I was just writing on the desk and, at some point, I see something written underneath addressed to me. It was known that only a girl could have written it, because this was not the first time such a thing happened at school. I replied to what the girl had written to me. She answered and I answered to her and so on we corresponded with each other. If I remember correctly, the first response from her was when I had written Led Zeppelin on my desk, as I was a "fan" of this famous rock band. Sardis, at some stage before the lesson started, yelled at me because I was writing on the desk and cursed the girl with her name which I had already learned. The expletive "f... the c... of D..." that he had uttered had seemed to me an unspeakable insult to something very dear to me, and as a result we came to grips, began to fight and found ourselves on the floor,

between desks. At that time, Giatromanolakis came in to give us a lesson and we had to interrupt. I, having as usual broken my glasses in the fight and still feeling insulted, asked Giatromanolakis to give us permission to leave school earlier, since it was also the last hour. I didn't tell him, however, why I wanted the permission. He assumed, and rightly so, that I wanted to go out "to clean up" and wouldn't give us permission. By the time Giatromanolakis' time was over, the spirits had calmed down and when we left the school to go home, I left with Sardis, asking him to pay me for the glasses he broke. I don't remember if, in the end, he gave me the whole amount, however, he certainly gave a large part. That was the first and last time a Greek paid for the damage he did to me by attacking me and hitting me. As for D... I had a chance to get to know her better.

From the many times we exchanged messages while writing on the desk, we became familiar enough that, at some point, I suggested that we meet in person to get to know each other. And indeed, D... accepted and we made an appointment to which she came. It was the first time in my life that I made a date with a girl and that's why I was quite curious. I don't remember what we talked about, but it wasn't the only time we met. We met a few more times but always had time and space constraints. I remember that she went to an English tutoring school, I think Stratigakis, which was next to the swings (the playground) in the central square of Chalandri. I used to wait for her to finish the lesson, so we could meet. The class was in the evening and not every day of the week. At her house they knew nothing of her friendship with me, just as they did not at mine. It was a shame, then, for there to be friendship between teenagers, because in the minds of the world, then, as now, two people of the opposite sex cannot go out as friends, only as lovers or would-be lovers! So the only chance we had was when D.. was going to English. On the other hand, we couldn't sit in any coffee shop (cafeteria, as the modern cafes were called at the time, where both members sat and not just men, as in the traditional ones) because we would draw attention, since we are not a family. And by the way, we didn't even have money to sit in cafes. So whenever we were together, we walked the streets. I remember that sometimes our path took us to dark places and the idea crossed my mind to play it man, i.e. tell her I love her and ask her to kiss her. But, I was too shy for such a thing, and on the other hand, I can't say that I had fallen in love with her. If I had fallen in love with her, I might have dared to tell her that I love her. In such circumstances we found ourselves a few times with D... Until one day I got tired of walking the same streets and I thought of seeking to further strengthen our relationship in the way I saw in the Greek cinema of the time: Asking her to go to the cinema together. We didn't go, not because bad luck didn't want to but because she couldn't find a way to justify her absence from

her house. I think she was in the fifth year of high school, namely she was 17 years old, an age when girls were still under close family supervision. So, since we didn't go to the cinema and I didn't consider her presence necessary in my life, the moment came when I didn't ask her to make a date again. The last time I heard from her was on the phone, when I succeeded enrolling in a university (in Panteio in particular). She had taken me to congratulate me. What happened with the life of this good girl, who seemed to me a little short and a little curvy, with a few more than the usual acne pimples on her face? The girl I dated for the first time in my life, when I had a look that, even now that I'm old, I find barely attractive? I hope she found someone much prettier than me and got her life together.

Unfortunately, however, I do not hope that he found something better. Although this is relative, because if the good man is not able to ensure the well-being of his partner, her life is not improved by his goodness.

The endless phone calls with someone I never saw, someone I saw often but I never called her and my pen pals

At least I met this girl a few times. For, at the same time, there were two others, with whom I was never alone. In fact one of them I never saw even once in my life. How did I meet her? I met her over the phone as Theodora after a prank. At that time, "pranks" on telephones were something of a fashion. That is, someone would call you, he wouldn't tell you who he was and he would tell you whatever he wanted, just to make fun of you. Mobile phones, of course, did not exist, but there were also very few landlines and no caller ID. So someone could play a prank on you. It happened to us regularly. The phone was in a corridor and to its left and right were rooms with closed doors. So every time the phone rang and someone in my family picked it up, when the call ended, the others would ask who it was. A common response was: None, it was a prank. One day Theodora called my house for such a prank. And we caught the conversation. Back then, the amount of time one could talk on a landline phone, at the cost of one unit, was unlimited. So we could talk as much as we wanted without worrying about the bill. And, for that, we talked for hours. At any age for a man, a girl's voice on the phone sounds good to him. That's how it seemed to me too, who was then 17 or 18 years old. And that's why I wasn't interested in the content of the conversation. After all, there was a response. And Theodora, who by the way was the one calling and never gave me her number to call her, was always in the mood for a lot of conversation. The only one who was bothered by the phone call that "had no end", was my mother.

Usually, at the time of the phone call, which always took place at night, my mother was in the neighboring room and because the doors of the rooms

were glass doors, there was no good insulation and you could hear what people were saying on the phone. When my mother would hear us talking for more than half an hour or an hour and not stopping, we would even laugh, she would shout at me: "Come on, stop sometimes, you talk for so many hours". "Now I'm done" I used to tell her, but couldn't stop hearing the nice girl's voice I heard on the other end of the line. So my mother's indignant exhortation was repeated several times until, finally, we hung up. This story lasted for a year. Until at some point I hoped that I could see the girl up close. So we made an appointment but the girl didn't come. She didn't even call back.

The other girl whose company I wanted was the daughter of our friendly family, the Inzirdzoglou family: Maria. We played together since we were little kids. She would come to our house, I would go to her house, where we both had multivolume encyclopedias that I adored, until, when I was 17 or 18 and she was 14 or 15, I thought of asking her to go to the movies together. She was a very sweet girl and although I didn't fall in love with her, I enjoyed being with her. She might not have had any objection either. Besides, I don't think anyone else had asked her out until then. But for this she had to get her family's approval. It seems she asked for approval, she didn't get it, and that's why at that stage her mother, Mrs. Giorgia, appeared at her house, thanked me and my mother for the invitation, but told us that the girl couldn't go out with me, because his father wouldn't let him. Thus, although I spent a great deal of time with Maria during my childhood and teenage years, I never, even once, found myself alone with her to have a human-like conversation. Since then I have not seen her again, I have lost track of her and I don't think I will ever see her again. Maybe better in one way, because I will always remember her as a beautiful and sweet little girl.

I must have had some need for communication with the "fair sex" at that time, because otherwise the attempts to go with a girl to the cinema are not explained. But also in general I must have needed communication. Then there was the possibility of communicating with strangers by opening correspondence with them, that is, by exchanging letters with others who wanted the same. These "pen pals" were known as pen pals. I don't remember where one could find their addresses. Probably in the newspapers, because I later remember addresses from Africa in some newspaper under the heading "Mail Wanted". I, such friends, made two: A girl from Denmark, Brenda, who was around my age and who had sent me a photo of her next to a horse and a boy from Thessaloniki. Except that the latter never found out with whom he corresponded, because, I no longer remember for what reasons, perhaps out of curiosity, I wrote to him under a female name. He had been very curious to get to know each other better. He asked me to send him, at least, a picture of myself. But what photo should I send him when he was expecting a girl and I was a boy? When I got tired of pretending to be the girl, which happened relatively quickly, I never texted him again.

The bullies and my rich classmate who killed himself in spectacular fashion

In general, although there were some of my classmates who got on my nerves, such as a corpulent bully, who sat in front of me and bragged that he had raped a girl once on his way home from school, and another who died early, whom many years later the newspapers used to praise for his trade union struggles, who liked to make a fool of a very calm and quiet classmate of ours, the sixth form of high school seemed to me the most relaxing class. Maybe because my classmates were the oldest in the school so that there were no older people to provoke us, maybe because I had the biggest guy in the class next to me and that's why I felt some security, maybe because, as in the fifth grade, I had 100 unexcused absences at my disposal, to use them as I wanted. Or because in the sixth grade there is a six-day class trip that doesn't happen in any other grade. An excursion that always leaves indelible memories, like the great moments in the life of every person who never experience them again.

So, on the fifth and sixth, I utilized almost all of my unexcused absences. It was not, of course, something difficult since each absence corresponded to an hour of class and we had six hours every day. I remember that once I had taken the bus with another truant (as those who purposely made unjustified absences were called), Fourtounis, and we had gone to Palea Penteli. I had been there several times before, apart from the fortnight's summer vacation I had spent earlier at my uncle's father's in-law house, which was near the observatory. In those years, Penteli still had many trees and was very beautiful. Later they were cut and built, or burned and built, and today from the second peak of Penteli, namely from the observatory, when you look down you see a forest, but not of trees, as then, but of apartment buildings.



From my fortnight vacation in Penteli. From left to right my mother, my brother, behind him my father, next to me my uncle's wife's sister, my uncle's wife Anna, my uncle Meltos, in front of him his mother-in-law and in front of all some neighbor who holds me in his hands.

Back in the background can be seen the monastery of Penteli and the forest around it

I liked to wander in the forest that was near the square where the Old Penteli bus stopped and therefore, if I could have company, I suggested this place as a place for an excursion. In fact, I once happened to go to the house of another classmate of mine that served as a holiday home for the family, because their normal house was a two-storey house with a garden in Chalandri. This classmate of mine, Giannis Kekeris, was an only son and the father had enough money. In his home in Penteli, Kekeris had the entire basement to himself, which he had converted into a studio, where he received his friends and girlfriends. I had a good relationship with Kekeris and that is why I had also visited him at his house in Chalandri. Besides, his father and mother were very kind to me and that's why I felt very comfortable in his house. When after my only visit I left Kekeris's house in Penteli, where I had met a bunch of his friends and girlfriends, I thought that he was very lucky. At that time, I couldn't

imagine that he would die early (age 38), with no first-degree heirs to this great fortune and in such a tragic way: Having become a Coast Guard airplane pilot, at one point flying with his co-pilot over the sea searching for wreckage, he opened the door of the plane and jumped into the void from a height of about two thousand meters. His parents had both recently been killed in a car accident and he and his wife had divorced without having had any children.

Mrs. Ismini, an illegal record by Theodorakis, the unjustified absences that ended up in movie theaters and the first "not suitable for minors" movie I ever saw

When we were absent, it wasn't necessary to be absent all day. We could be gone for a few hours. In these cases, my school friends, like Manoussis, who I remember, we used to gather in a small cafe in Kennedy Square owned by a lady called Ismini. In fact, it was not a coffee shop but EVGA, as we used to call small confectioneries at the time, because they mainly sold milk from EVGA, the Hellenic Dairy Industry. And like EVGA, it had few tables, some inside and some outside. Four or five of us would gather there to skip class. Mrs. Ismini had no problem, of course, because we are absentees. She didn't ask us, and I don't think there were that many people sitting at her tables. And I don't remember what we were talking about. We might just be gossiping about our classmates and teachers. However, the phase that will remain unforgettable for me was when a girl once appeared at the table. And a nice girl too. One of us must have known her, she passed by Mrs. Ismini's coffee shop by chance and he told her to sit down for a while. This could have been my classmate Gatsoulis who I think at one point I saw him holding her hand. I remember Gatsoulis because he had said something to her that was unforgettable to me, when I saw it applied throughout my life. He had told her, "You girls always find chicks easier than us boys find chicks, and if we can find ten chicks, you can find a hundred boys". I don't think the girl agreed, because she might have come from a family that didn't allow their girls to have chicks, which was common at the time. However, Gatsoulis had the style of a "heartthrob" and the relative comfort, otherwise he would not have spoken to the girl like that or held her hand. And with Gatsoulis I must have had some company when I was at school, otherwise it is not explained that one day I was at his house and he lent me some vinyl 33rpm records. That I was at his house is certain, because I remember that he had me listen to his favorite band, Emerson, Lake and Palmer. I don't remember for sure if the records that I had brought home to listen to at some point were his, and among them I found a Theodorakis record, in an unrelated cover, which had been made abroad. I was, then, old enough and I

had learned that Theodorakis was banned by the dictatorship, as a communist, and that's why you didn't hear his songs on the radio or find his records in record stores. And yet, from the beginning, the ban seemed unfair to me because the album was worthed the while: It was "Mauthausen". This was the first album by Theodorakis that I heard and the only one by this composer that I heard during the dictatorship.

We had a few other absences going to the movies. We once went to the "Eleftheria" cinema near Douro Square but I don't remember what play we saw. It must have been one of the days we had afternoon school, because at that time, the cinemas started at 4pm. In this cinema I had seen the first "not suitable for minors" movie of my life. In these "inappropriate for minors" movies, you had to be seventeen to be admitted. That's why they didn't put anyone who looked smaller. If he insisted, they would ask for his ID. But I, at the age of sixteen, I was a little different than when I was seventeen. I was tall enough for the cinema's requirements so I entered 'illegally'. I remember the play I saw then was "The Blackboard Jungle," a great play about New York public high schools in 1956 that made the song "Rock Around the Clock" famous. Another time we went to a cinema in Athens, skipping school. I remember we had seen the film "Solaris" by Tarkovsky. We thought it was a very boring movie.

But the majority of absences I did after the six-day trip, for two reasons: First, because it was the end of the school year, so I wouldn't have time to make up the remaining absences in the following months, and second, because I wanted to hang out with my classmate Guva, who had received a six-day suspension due to his behavior during the six-day excursion. But before I talk about these shenanigans, I want to talk about the six-day excursion.

The six-day excursion of the last class of the sixth form high school: A bittersweet experience

The six-day excursion took place in May 1974. Within six days we visited several sights of Greece, first of all Meteora. I must have been to Meteora with my family before, but on school trips it is not so important where you go but who you are with. If your company is good, you have a good time. If not, you are left with unpleasant memories. I can't say that I have unpleasant memories, i.e as to say I wish I hadn't gone. I have, however, retained some bitterness from that excursion, the cause of which I shall explain below. Previously I must say that from Meteora we went to Metsovo passing through the Katara pass which is located at about 1600 meters altitude and that is why there was snow. In Metsovo we only took pictures and continued our way to Ioannina. From Ioannina we went to Igoumenitsa and from there to the Greek-Albanian border, to Kakavia. At that time,

Greece was still, formally, at war with Albania and claimed a piece of it, which it had managed to conquer at the beginning of World War II, but lost it when the German army occupied Greece in 1941. Consequence of the bad relations between of two countries was that the borders with Albania should be closed and that a Greek could not go to Albania nor an Albanian to Greece. In our coach, about ten kilometers before the border, a junior army officer entered as an escort, since earlier the coach had stopped at an army block. At the border they took us to the military outposts from where the Albanian military outposts could be seen, a little further away, and on the mountain facing Albania was seen engraved in huge letters "LAUDI MARXISM LENINISM", namely "Honour Marxism-Leninism". Albania was the first communist country I saw even remotely. I was impressed by the huge letters on the mountain. We did not sit long at the border and returned to Ioannina, to the hotel. There, at some stage, the police came and caught Guva, because he had thrown a firecracker from the window of the hotel with a special pistol. I had not seen the phase, but I had the desire to oppose the police, which I had begun to consider a support of the dictatorship, and at the same time to defend Guva. So, when the cops came to get Guva, I said we threw the firecracker together, so we ended up together at Ioannina Security Police Headquarters. There, after they let us wait for some time in the corridor, a rank and file came and asked us who threw the firecracker. I was willing to say that we threw it together but the rank and file persisted asking who pulled the trigger. When Guvas said that he pulled it, the rank-and-file asked him why. And Gouvas answered him "for fun". Then they let us go and from there we ended up in a discotheque that was empty of people so only us, the students of the school, were dancing on the dance floor. The morning of the next day must have been when we visited the sights of Ioannina, among which the refuge of Ali Pasha on the islet in the lake, where the famous Pasha breathed his last, mortally wounded by a bullet from the soldiers of the empire, which had made him a pasha and against which he had rebelled. We also visited a large mosque in the castle of Ioannina that had been turned into a museum.

The next day we ended up in Corfu, where, after they showed us around the sights, such as the Kanoni site and Achilleio, they left us free in the afternoon to wander around the city on our own, setting 11 pm as the mandatory time to return to the hotel. I and some others, like Guvas, had the bright idea to stand out from the crowd of our classmates. The result was that our classmates ended up at a disco, where they also found the students of a girls high school that also went on a trip to Corfu, and had a good time. Me and the others, or me and Guvas at least, got lost in the narrow streets of the old town and ended up after much searching at the hotel, shortly after 11, without going to the discotheque. Although we visited, in secret

of course, some girls' rooms from where, after a while, the supervising teachers collected us, I was left with the bitterness that we missed the fun with the girls at the disco.

From Corfu we went to Preveza and from there we tried to visit Lefkada. For some reason, however, in order for our coach to board the floating platform that at that time served as a ferry, it had to wait a long time, so we finally limited ourselves to gazing at Lefkada from afar and then getting on the coach and leaving. From the point where then was the floating platform and today is a drawbridge the view of Lefkada is like the view of a seaside town from a boat at some distance from it, that is, quite magnificent. That's how I saw Lefkada for the first time and I was quite sad because we didn't go to see it up close, even though it was on the excursion program. I was sad because I thought I would never see this island again, since there was no particular reason to visit it again. At that time, Lefkada was not considered a tourist island. How could I imagine then that, after a few extremely eventful years, Lefkada would become my second home and my permanent residence to this day.

Before returning to Athens, we visited Agrinio and Messolongi. We must have stayed one night in Agrinio, because I remember a classmate of mine who asked a kiosk in the central square where the brothel was! I was impressed by this stupid question, as was the man in the kiosk, which, of course, gave no answer. My same classmate, as I found out, when we were at the hotel in Ioannina, had taken off all his clothes and ran naked in the corridors, where were located the rooms that had been taken by a girls' high school, which was also making its excursion. It appeared since then that this classmate of mine had some obsession with sex.

With Guvas at Gourounadika at the end of my high school life and the "leaving" exams

When, after the six-day excursion, we resumed classes, Guvas, because of the firecracker he threw from the hotel balcony, had a six-day expulsion. But he didn't tell his parents and every morning, when we had morning classes, or every afternoon, when we had afternoon classes, he left his house with his bag to go, supposedly, to school. I, having room to make more than 36 absences, during the six days of Guvas' expulsion, I was also absent and together with Guvas we went to the Gourounadika that I have mentioned above. Guvas used to come to school on a big black old bicycle and then take it with him to Gourounadika. There they engaged in bicycle stunts, some of which I have captured in photographs. This bike was not only very tall but also had only one brake. I had learned to ride a bike in Polydrosos of Chalandri on the bike of Giannis Argyris which was more new model and therefore

lower. Nevertheless, I didn't let the opportunity go to waste and took a few rides on Guvas' bike. I will never forget the strain of riding this bike, when at some point I decided to ride it down Pentelis Street. Pentelis Street is a downhill road and if you don't brake, the bike accelerates. But when you only have the front brake, as was the case with Guvas' bike, it's not easy to brake when you've developed a lot of speed, because that makes the bike stiff and you can fall down, especially when the bike is so high that you can't reach the ground with your feet. And the problem gets worse when the road is narrow and full of cars, as Pentelis was, and you are forced to ride very near the pavemant. If your bike goes to the left, the car coming down Pentelis hits you.

A few days after Guva's six-day expulsion, the exams period came. These exams, the so-called baccalaureate because after them you got the "Graduate" of the sixth-form high school, had no other connection with entering universities, other than that the grade of the baccalaureate was added to the grades one got in the entrance exams. Then these were separate from the graduation exams. If we already had good grades from previous quarters, we didn't have to worry about writing perfectly in the baccalaureate exams. I, out of acquired speed, read a lot during the exam period. Nevertheless, in the Algebra class, which was no longer Algebra but higher Mathematics with functions, sequences, integrals and limits, I "did it wet", as the same mathematician had told me in the past during another failure and now. That is, out of all the problems I had to solve, I didn't solve any and the only thing I wrote under the problems I had to solve was the word "Answers".

A love that was never expressed

But this is not the only reason why I am commenting on these final exams. I comment on them, because they found me in love for the first time in my life. I had fallen in love with a girls' high school student from the last grades too. I had fallen in love with her "at first sight", as they said then. In particular, I had seen her passing with other students, all wearing blue aprons of course, from the street by which we were returning from school at noon and the girls were going. I saw her and I was hooked. That is, from the first time I saw her and after that, when I saw her, something like pain or anxiety gripped me. It is not something that can be described and can only be understood by someone who has fallen in love. And as if this was not enough for me, I was obliged to see her almost every day, because to go to her house she passed through the street where mine was. The unprecedeted romantic feeling I felt for this girl was so intense that at some point I decided to try to overcome my natural timidity and give her a note, "Ravasaki" as such notes were called back then. So, I sat down and wrote it and one

afternoon I set it up on the road that passed in front of my house, today's Costa Varnalis, but quite a bit higher than my house and I waited for her to pass so I could give it to her. But the "goddess of luck" had a different opinion about my possible acquaintance with this girl, and that day her friends passed without her. I caught hold of one of them who seemed to me to be her best friend when I saw them together in the street, and I asked her what had become of that girl, her friend, whose name I did not even know. She told me that she would not come to school that day and asked me why I was so interested and how I knew her. Of course, she didn't get a satisfactory answer and I left without handing over the "ravasaki". That night, at home, my courage completely left me and I decided to tear the "ravasaki" in order not to make a fool of me. It was a society then, and it still is, where women expected to be picked on by the dudes and if a man couldn't play the dude, as I never could, he had no hope of a girl paying him any attention. A dude wouldn't wait for a girl to give her a note. He would approach her on the street on his motorcycle and speak to her ironically and with sexual innuendos. I didn't know how to make fun of girls, I didn't know about sexual innuendos and I didn't even have a car. With the fear, therefore, that I would receive a bad reception if I approached her, i.e. that I would "eat the porridge pie", as they typically said at the time, I tore the "ravasaki" and to console myself that I was losing her and someone else would take her, I said to myself that she will find no one else to love her more. I later found out from my classmate, who liked to play tricks on my other classmate who was extremely quiet and harmless, that this girl was called Pitsa and that she was the girlfriend of someone with a car. I, at that time, not only didn't have a car (I never managed to get one) but I didn't even have a bicycle.

So during my preparation for the final exams, because my room window was over the street, I saw her almost every day go by and I suffered: relatively tall, blonde, with her hair in a bun, and two or three books resting on her chest. Back then it was fashionable for girls not to carry bags. I must have felt a little stupid because I asked myself: What's the point of trying to get good grades and excel in my future life if I'm going to spend a lifetime without Pitsa? The tragic irony is that Pitsa "had midnight" for all of this and it was my fault. The first and last time I spoke to her (because I haven't seen her since), was by phone, after some time, when I was working for a while in my father's factory. I had found her phone and called her, to at least hear her voice. She picked it up herself and asked who it was. All I had to answer her was that she didn't know me and that I had seen her on the street. She asked me not to call her again and I didn't. At least I had talked to the girl I fell in love with for the first time in my life!

My preparation for university and the inglorious end of the military dictatorship of the colonels

That summer I spent going to a tutoring school every day except Sunday, to prepare to take exams to enter the university, specifically Panteio. Before I started tutoring, I had to get money from my father to pay for it. It was only natural that my father wanted to know what I wanted to study. I too had answered him that I wanted to study political science and that is why in the list that I would submit to the Ministry of Education before the entrance exams, I would put Panteio first. My father didn't even want to hear about Panteio, who, according to him, was a "school for oxen". Instead, he was asking me to study law to become a lawyer. Since I was, as usual, unmovable, he did not give me money for the tutoring school. But when one afternoon he saw me returning with my brother's neighbor and friend Mimi from the center of Athens, where we had gone to look for a job, and he learned what I was looking for, he relented and gave me money for the tutoring school. And let me study politics.

After all, that was the time when politics rose to the forefront of social life. Because, as soon as I finished high school, the Greek government supported the far-right nationalist Samson's coup against the then president of Cyprus, the Orthodox bishop Makarios (July 15, 1974), which overthrew him and, because it was accompanied by an orgy of violence against the island's Turkish community, provoked Turkey's military intervention. Turkey, like Greece and Great Britain, was a guarantor for the observance of the international treaty for the creation of the Cypriot state. The Greek government reacted to the Turkish intervention with a general mobilization of Greeks capable of bearing arms, but found that it neither had the means to equip, feed and clothe the Greeks it conscripted, nor were they willing to fight obeying the orders of a military dictatorship. In order not to overthrow the dictatorship by its own army, its leaders decided to withdraw from the governance of the country and leave the governance to the politicians. For this purpose, they brought former Prime Minister Karamanlis from France (July 24, 1974) and assigned him to form a temporary government of national unity to hold elections. The people, when Karamanlis came, were celebrating in the streets. But I, who, as usual, when I heard "many cherries I kept a small basket", did not celebrate at all. I had already read the "Communist Manifesto" which, ironically, I had seen in a bookstore window on the day of the coup and bought it, and I had become a Communist. Anyway, after more than 7 years of ban on political activity now everyone was talking about politics. It was natural that I too, influenced by my readings and aspiring to become a resistance student, to choose political science as my subject of study, which I considered useful for my involvement in politics.

Going down every day from Chalandri to Athens, to go to the tutoring center, I came across the first free demonstrations, after 7 years of their ban. They took place

in the Constitution Square and were intended to protest against foreigners, whom Greek politicians always blame for the ills of Greece, in order to "get their tails out" of these ills. The left was the protagonist in these demonstrations, where they blamed the American imperialists for allowing Turkey to intervene militarily in Cyprus. They were not interested, it seems, in the fact that if Turkey had not intervened in Cyprus, as it should have done under international law, the Greek Cypriot far-right would have forced hundreds of thousands of Turkish Cypriots to leave their homeland and would have united Cyprus with Greece. I, at the time, thought that the left was at the vanguard of the struggle for the rights of the poor and the oppressed, and I did not know that it was a perennial bastion of expansionist Greek nationalism. That's why I went to the protests. Until one day when I didn't go, because it was Sunday and I didn't have lessons, the police "fell" on the demonstrators and dispersed them. Then the first political activists after the fall of the dictatorship were caught: Giannis Felekitis and Miltiadis Karagiannakis. I knew Felekitis as the editor of the weekly four-page newspaper "Labor Struggle", because I used to read it along with all the other communist newspapers, including "Nea Ellada" of the K.K.E. which evolved into "Radical", which I was also taking. It was because of his arrest that I saw a picture of him, which would have major implications for my later life.

Along with my interest in politics, I was also interested in learning well the subjects I was taught in school. The tutoring school belonged to someone called Belezinis and was located in Koletti street. At the tutoring school, for the first time after 6 years, namely since I had finished elementary school, I found myself in the same class with girls. And as much as my interest in the fairer sex had been suppressed for so many years that I only saw it from afar (I had neither a sister nor a girlfriend, because even my childhood friends hadn't hung out with me for years), its presence next to me started to make me look at it. But the "representative" of the fairer sex I was looking at was looking at others and I doubt if she ever realized that I was looking at her. I remember her because she had an unusual name, she was called Fevronia. I didn't dare to talk to girls, but I did dare to talk to boys. One of those I talked to the most was Savvas. I was having a conversation with him, when at some point I heard him blaming the communists. Obviously I, as a communist, had the opposite opinion. I found him again in Panteio, where I entered, after the entrance exams, which I had taken at a high school in Patision street. I will never forget that, until then, in 1974, in order to enter a school of the Legal Circle (a circle was a group of schools that in order to enter one had to pass the same courses), it was necessary to pass 4 courses: Composition, History, Ancient Greek and Latin. When I took my exams they had removed Latin. The following year they brought them back. Also, I will not forget what happened to me when I was to be examined in Ancient Greek.

Until we entered the room to write, we were kept in the high school's courtyard for hours. And inside, in order to leave the room, we had to give the examination form and then leave. Me after so many hours in the courtyard, when it was to write Ancient Greek, I was in the mood to relieve myself. In the end I had to hold back, all the while I was writing Ancient Greek which was also the most difficult subject. It really was a traumatic experience. But I think this whole exam process is a traumatic experience for the examinees and I don't think anyone has good memories of it.

UNIVERSITY AND POLITICAL ACTION

A student who admired the workers, read communist books and considered it as a duty to society to join a communist organization - The student union

I heard about the fact that I entered Panteio, fifth out of the eight hundred (as a result of which I also received a scholarship of 12,000 drachmas), on the radio at my father's factory, where I had started working again after the entrance exams. I was working on the biggest machine in the factory, the marble block splitter, better known as the crate. Because this job gave me the opportunity to do something else while the crate was cutting the volume of marble taking some time (a few hours), while watching the machine I sat and read some communist book. So I read "State and Revolution" by Lenin and "The Proletarian Revolution and the Apostate Kautsky" by the same author. Being a communist and a worker, at that time I considered it an honor to work as a worker. I was so proud that, in 1977, when I had to obtain a voter's book, I declared "Worker" as my occupation. Fortunately they had, already, opened my eyes a little and I did not vote for anyone, neither in the 1977 elections nor in any other parliamentary or Euro-parliamentary elections in my lifetime.

My studies at Panteio, because they started a few months after the Metapolitefsis of 24th July 1974, combined with my participation in student unionism which at that time was par excellence politicized. I remember that there were always student assemblies, where the student youth of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties crossed their swords. In Panteio, only the student factions from the socialist and communist parties or organizations participated in the assemblies, and not the student factions of the center or the right, like ONNED. And the confrontations took place between the representatives of the factions of the parliamentary parties and the representatives of the factions of the extra-parliamentary organizations. And because these representatives were of a certain age and had developed resistance action during the recent military dictatorship, resulting in persecution, torture, imprisonment, etc., they had a lot to say and in a nice, rhetorical way. In these assemblies, student issues were quickly abandoned and the discussions led to political confrontations on the subject of the form of the revolution in Greece. I admired the orators, without having any idea how far their discussions were from the sad reality of the deep state and cultural obscurantism, which were and remain the main characteristics of Greek society. Changes were happening and that was interesting. I remember that at some point there had been published polygraphed documents with information about the collaboration of some professors with the junta. Some of them, after the revelations or even before, had left the School on their

own. For the rest, the students had to decide what to do. Thus began a series of assemblies that became known as apohountopiisi (ousting of the junta's collaborators) assemblies. The student unions' leaders also decided to draw up a new statute of the Panteion's student association. I spent hours at the meetings and if I dared to make any intervention, which, of course, no one paid any attention to, because I did not represent any faction, I did it in favor of the factions of extra-parliamentary organizations, such as the Socialist Revolution Organization or the Organization of Marxist Leninists of Greece (The O.M.L.E.). That's how I caught the interest of their representatives and they tried to include me in their ranks. But, these days, I had met by chance in the central square of Chalandri, Giannis Felekis, who I recognized from his photo in the newspapers. That evening he was with his son-in-law Abavis, who was a trade unionist among the lithographers. Abavis was a very eloquent person and because of him, and mainly because "Labor Struggle" seemed to me like the most militant newspaper, from then on I began a certain collaboration with Felekis. So, when the representatives of the factions approached me to recruit me, I already had a political position. But I didn't tell them anything, because I was interested in hearing their own opinions. Being thus known, when it was decided to set up a ten- member committee to draw up the new statute of the association, and the dominant three factions, P.A.S.P., Demokratikos Agonas and Panspuadastiki S.K., had taken the positions of nine members, my friends from the extra-parliamentary left were alarmed when, instead of them promoting a useless nomination for the tenth place, I did. I, as expected, in the absence of an opponent, was elected for the tenth place. I knew that my speech would not count but I was curious to know how the trade unionists worked. And I learned: At our statute meetings one person from each faction would come with a draft statute that his faction had given him. They were comparing these three designs and finding ways to combine them. In the end they had agreed on a plan that would be brought to the assembly for a vote. I, since they gave me the right, had made proposals that were attached to be discussed, such as the proposal that students who were soldiers should not vote. It goes without saying that none of my proposals passed, while the plan prepared by the three factions passed. After all, the votes in the assemblies were unnecessary. When, after the debates, it was time to vote, each faction called its own people who were in the School but had not heard the debates, to vote for its own proposal. And so, while at the time of the debate in the amphitheater you could see about fifty people, at the time of the vote, another rabble would appear who had not heard anything, but voted by order. These voters were known as "trees". Fortunately, I have never been a "tree" in my life. But, as a Maoist, namely trade unionist of O.M.L.E. who also encouraged me to join its student faction, the PPSP, told me , the majority factions reserved women for their voters! I, by not becoming a "tree", lived without a woman... And as if that wasn't

enough, from my boredom during the long hours of discussions I started accepting cigarettes offered to me by a friend of mine, Varelas, and I learned smoking. It took 12 whole years before I managed to stop smoking for the first time.

It is worth saying a few words about this Maoist friend of mine who was an activist of the P.P.S.P. He looked about 40 to me, though he might have been 30. He was tall and husky. He was also tanned and kept a neat mustache, as was the fashion in the working world of the time. I think he had told me that he also did the construction worker. In general, in appearance and profession, he was the model of the Maoist of the time, which, in retrospect, makes me think how limited his world was because of his political choice. At some stage he had invited me to his house to convert me to Maoism. His house, which was, I think, in Metz, had impressed me, for it was an attic with a terrific view of the Acropolis. I remember he gave me two brochures, one about Mao Zedong and one of Mao himself. When I read the first one, which was a long article about Mao published in China's largest circulation newspaper (I think "People's Daily"), I felt that it was aimed at intellectually retarded people, namely with a very low IQ. It struck me that there were people who read such things. Now I know that totalitarian regimes turn man into a soldier, who must not think but only obey. And in this field the communist regimes excelled, like no other regime. Understandably, I didn't tell my Maoist fellow student these views, because I didn't want to get into a fight. And I was sure that I would fight, because I am left with the impression that the Maoist activists also bet on the imposition of their views, not only on persuasion. In the end, all I managed to do was postpone the fight. The fight came when I stood as a Trotskyite candidate in the student elections. Then my fellow student felt that he had wasted so much of his time trying to convince me.

Probationary member in the Communist Internationalist Party of Greece – The first march for the first anniversary of the Polytechnic massacre and the first post-war mass demonstration of anarchists in Greece

And indeed, during the time I was "searching a roof under" the factions of the extra-parliamentary organizations (because I had also attended a meeting of the O.S.E. for the students who wished to join its student faction), I had entered the process of becoming a member of Feleki's party, of the Communist International Party of Greece (K.D.K.E.). But before I began my political apprenticeship as a probationary party member, I had already become involved in party activities on a practical level. I mean I already had been a newspaper vendor for the newspaper

"Ergati Pali" outside the Polytechnic University, at the pre-election rally of the United Left in Piraeus (with Mikis Theodorakis as speaker) and outside factories, such as the tobacco factory in Lenorman. As I had also carried the banner of the "Workers' Struggle" in the march of the extra-parliamentary left for the first anniversary of the Polytechnic massacre.

In this march, which took place on November 15, 1974 because elections had been announced on the 17th, there were over ten thousand people and all of them were, in the great majority, people of the Maoist organizations, namely the Revolutionary Communist Party of Greece (E.K.K.E.) and the O.M.L.E. which I mentioned above. These Maoist organizations, although totalitarian and pro-Stalinist, could allow Trotskyists to participate in the march, such as the "Workers' Struggle", although they had limited us to the tail end of the march. However, they could not tolerate the anarchists, whom they considered to be petty bourgeois, sycophants and agents of the imperialists. The anarchists, on the other hand, had decided to participate in this march and participated a few hundreds of them. The result was that they walked behind the tail of the march and at least twenty to thirty meters further back, as if in case they joined the march, we would catch some contagious disease. Such was the hatred of the extreme left, as well as the parliamentary left, towards the anarchists at that time. This hatred was overcome over the years as anarchists ceased to be anarchists and became communists. Now this change is almost fully completed. Anyway, that day I saw anarchists for the first time in my life. I had already read a book about anarchists, "The Anarchists" by Roderick Kendward, but I didn't pay attention to this movement. And the anarchists of the march had made me separate myself emotionally from them, because their appearance had also seemed to me furious (the echo of the hippie movement of the 60s still survived) and their slogans playful and not serious, like the "Fola to all the dogs" they shouted, when the Maoists of the main body of the march shouted "Fola to the dog of the E.S.A.". The "dog of the E.S.A." was the head of the Greek Military Police, Dimitrios Ioannidis, who had ruled Greece from behind the scenes from November 25, 1973, when he led a coup, until July 23, 1974, when the military handed over power to the politicians. The Greek Military Police had played a leading role in the terrible tortures that the military junta did to those who resisted it. And Ioannidis had excelled in this specialty since the time of the Makronissos concentration camp. Finally, from 1974 onwards, he spent his entire life, until he died, in prison. He got a total of 36 years in prison! I think that this way he was punished more for his crimes than if he had been executed.

The procedure to become a member of K.D.K.E. it included weekly visits for party education to the home of its member, Chussos, Stratos Chussos I think. He was a mathematician and lived in a ground floor apartment, or underground, in Agios

Eleftherios. In these "lessons" also came a nice girl my age, Ismeni, who also had the same ambitions as me. Also coming was a niece of Chussos, who had recently come to Athens from her village and was hosted by Chussos. If I remember correctly, after an introduction covering the evolution of societies from the primitive communist society (which the communists believed in) to the feudal one, the comrade was talking to us about the French revolution of 1789, as described by Mignet in his book. The history of the French revolution by Mignet must have been likeable for the Greek communists, because I also found it in a second-hand bookshop, bound inside the prison and with many notes in the margins of the pages. It must have passed through the hands of any communist prisoner in the 40's or 50's. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, I did not manage to complete my "basic" education and therefore never became a full member of the K.D.K.E. However, while I worked politically with Giannis, Felekis, I met interesting people, such as his partner Sofronis Papadopoulos and Christos Anastasiadis, not to mention his three sisters and his girlfriend Mania who were good girls. Anastasiadis was old and had known the entire development of the Trotskyist movement in Greece. But he had no self-conceit at all. He was so open with me that at one point, when I wrote a report about a mobilization by the students at the School of Medical Assistants (S.V.I.E.), Anastasiadis placed it on the front page of the newspaper "Ergati Pali", of which he was something like editor-in-chief! This report was not my first newspaper article. I used to write every now and then under the pseudonym Dimos Parias.

A deprived student life that finds an outlet in student unionism and in politics

Mania, of whom I spoke before, was a very beautiful fair-haired girl whom I had first met at Felekis's house, and who, as far as the party was concerned, was "more royal than the king." As if she had it in her schedule, whenever we talked about politics together, she would fight with me. She did everything she could to make me dislike her. But how can you dislike a beautiful blonde, especially if you have nothing to do with women, like I did at that time when I was 19 years old? The fight with her that I remember most was in Kournovo, the place of execution of the most famous Trotskyist in Greek history, Pantelis Pouliopoulos, and dozens of other political prisoners. We had gone there by coach on the anniversary of the execution, to honor his memory. The coach was chartered by the "pilgrims", so during the journey I heard many revolutionary songs, of which, in my memory, "Winds of storms blow around us" which is an arrangement of "Varsavianka" was etched in my memory. But what had annoyed me the most, was her manner the day that I had gone to the newspaper's offices to complain about my permanent

status as a probationary member. But I will talk about it below.

It must have been in the first year of Panteion that, apart from a couple of fellow students, such as Varelas and Savvas, with whom I had gone to the same tutoring school, I had also made two girlfriends, whom I only saw at the School. One was Avgi, from Cyprus, and the other was Kallia. These are my only female classmates that I remember. I went to a French course together with Kallia. Since I could take French lessons for free in Panteion, I went for about a year and a half to these lessons, hoping to finish learning the French language, which I had studied for about five years in high school. In the place where we did French, which was a separate building near the School, I was sitting next to Kallia. And she was blonde, like all the women who caught my interest in my life. I can't say, however, that I ever acquired any particular aspirations towards her. I only remember that we laughed a lot. I had the characteristic, when I was in good company, of finding some humor that I never found under normal circumstances. After all, I did not complete my studies in French then. After a year and a half, I stopped going to classes and didn't see Kallia anymore. However, because I had the impression that Kallia was more interested in me, before our contacts stopped, I had suggested to her that we go to a cinema. She also found an excuse not to come, so I understood that she was not, in fact, more interested in me.

The whole first year I went to classes as usual and after that to the student assemblies. And yet, I can't say that I lived what is known as "student life", i.e. the carefree life that students lead with their friends. At most, I drank coffee and smoked cigarettes with Varelas, in the little cafe behind Panteion. From "studying a lot" I got a scholarship even after the end of the first year, like when I entered, which was another 12,000 drachmas. However, before the end of the year, the assemblies for "apohuntopiisi" also stopped, without reaching a decision on what to do with the teachers who collaborated with the junta. The bad tongues said that the students who were the protagonists of the assemblies and had not obtained a degree, because in the dictatorship they had been forced to be absent from the School due to their struggles, reached an agreement with the professors. The students undertook to stop ousting the dictatorship's collaborators, and the professors would show flexibility in the students' exams, so that the students could get their degrees. But before the end of the school year, the student elections were held for the manning of the Board of Directors of the School's students' association. In these elections, the student wing of the K.D.K.E., the party that launched the "Workers' Struggle", forced me to stand as a candidate, even though I told them that I did not have time to make our positions known and they would not vote for us. In the end, we run two candidates and got three votes. The third was of my friend and fellow student Savvas.

Rebelling against the suffocating everyday life: The first trip of my life without my parents

Together with Savvas I decided, on the eve of Easter 1975, to try my luck, to see if I could make a long and unusual trip, such as I had never made before in my life. I asked him if he would come down to his hometown in Crete for Easter and when he said yes, I asked him if he could host me. And when he said yes again, I decided to go with him to Crete and in this way make a big opening in relation to what I had done up until then in my life. I didn't have money for the trip and when I asked my father, he didn't give me, as I should have expected, because even in the past when I asked him for books or for movies, he didn't give. Fortunately, I found the courage and asked my uncle Meltos and he gave it to me. In fact, I had asked him for five hundred drachmas and he gave me a thousand. I had pocketed a banknote without looking at it and only when I was already in Crete, I found that he had given me twice what I had asked for. And that wasn't the only time I asked him for money. I asked him again after some years and he again gave it to me. He was a nice person, but he had also suffered a lot in his life.

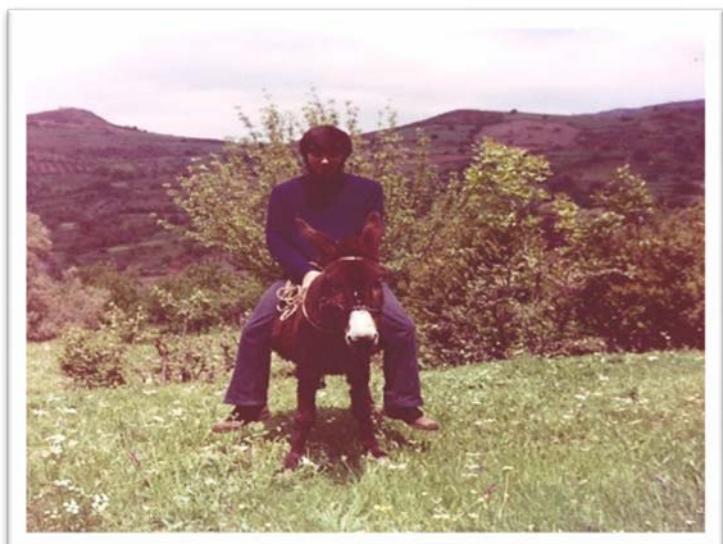
We went to Crete by a boat from Piraeus that made the route Piraeus-Rethymno. It was so crowded that we could neither sit nor stand anywhere but the deck. And it was night when we were traveling and it was cold. I had taken a sleeping-bag with me, but it was very thin and did not let you relax on the iron deck, where it was very noisy from the ship's engines. To avoid the cold, I had entered a boat but it was cold there too and I had nothing to cover myself except a face towel. I don't remember if it was then or on another trip to Crete, when, forced to spend the night on deck, I had entered a box of those that keep the life jackets. And from that I was then forced to get out, because one of the ship's staff was opening the lids of the boxes and taking out the people who had found shelter in there. I was out before he came to my box. Anyway, it was a torturous trip and that's why I still remember it. But it was worth it because where I arrived, after disembarking in Rethymno and making a bus journey over steep slopes, that made you fear you might fall off the cliff, was another world! The village, Patsos, where I ended up, was at the end of the bus route at some elevation. It had nothing but a few cafes in the square and a grocery store. The whole village had only three cars and everyone in the village knew each other. Even the language they spoke was quite different from the Greek I had heard until then. It was Greek but with several words of its own and an accent that, when used by elderly people talking to each other, I couldn't understand what they were saying. I confess that I liked Cretan back then, i.e. the idiom spoken by the inhabitants of Crete, especially in the villages. I still had no idea about the bad side of Crete, the side they were denouncing in a humorous way in the Greek films of the

classical Greek cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. Even my friend's house in the village, where his mother lived with his sister, a girl in the fifth or sixth grade, had made an impression on me. It was a large room with a fireplace and a smaller one next to it, like a warehouse, which had been built very recently and was still bricked up. But the main thing was that the house had neither a kitchen nor a toilet! Consequently, during the fifteen or so days that I stayed there, I did not bathe and went outside the village for my needs. My ill-fated friend, perceiving perhaps that something had to be done, had brought with him from Rethymnon a toilet basin, and while we stayed there he worked to make himself a toilet and a cistern.

But I was young then and I considered all these details. My friend and I walked the hills around the village all day for various jobs. One to collect wood for the fireplace which we carried with a donkey, Pele, the other to take two goats to pasture, the third so that my friend could plow one of his fields with a digger, to which he had also adapted a cart and sometimes he used it as a means of transport etc. I will never forget the way he secured a lamb to slaughter for Easter. He had ascended a mountain, where a friend or relative was tending his flock, and by whistling and making noises he succeeded in gathering the flock in one place and seizing the lamb that was going to be slaughtered. When he crowded the flock I had lost sight of him, and after some time I saw him coming down the mountainside with the lamb on his shoulder. This lamb was slaughtered at home. He was then scratched by opening a hole in his sheepskin and blowing which caused the sheepskin to inflate like a balloon before it was removed from the animal's body. I had never seen such things before. And I didn't even pay as much attention to them as I do now. I had given more importance to the trip we had made to the top of the mountain neighboring the village, which took us hours to climb, and when we arrived the water we had with us ran out. Then, during the descent, we looked for springs, that is, water that gushed from the earth, to quench our thirst. Fortunately, my friend knew the places where there were springs, so we quenched our thirst by bending down on the ground and drinking the water from the pool created by the spring, after removing the insects first.



With the donkey Pele for wood, Savvas to the right



Riding the donkey Pele

**Easter in the "Far West" of Greece: In a remote village of Crete with
only a shop and three coffee shops**

And I had given even more importance to the customs that preceded the Resurrection and the feasts that followed it. For Easter, my friend's other two brothers had also come to the village, his older and younger, as well as his father who was only coming home to sleep. His father was then a shepherd outside Heraklion.

My friend and I hung out with his younger brother and the other young people of the village. I was then when I drank raki for the first time, which is the typical Cretan drink, and I danced the Cretan pentozali dance, which is a slow dance, danced by large groups, so you don't need to know anything more to dance it, than to drag your feet like the others. My friend and I had then visited various houses in the village and everywhere we were treated to something, along with raki always. On Good Friday I had watched the "burning of Judas" and had heard the donkeys of the village braying, when the Epitaph was roaming the streets of the village and the priests were chanting. The next day, a little while before the Resurrection, a group of young people and children, we had gone around the whole village hitting a semantron and after the Resurrection we had ended up in a cafe, where, accompanied by music from a lyre player, we had danced until late, very late at night. I don't remember if it was then, or some other Easter that I visited this village (because I visited it the following Easter as well), that my friend and his brother and I had walked in the night to the neighboring village and found there a group of young people with whom we had drunk a lot before walking back to our village. This collective way of entertainment that included, more or less, all the young men of the village and some young women who participated at least in the traditional dances, was unknown to me until then. But I liked it, because with our group occupying the village square, where about twenty people danced together, I felt as if the village was my home. And fortunately, the Cretans had not yet become so rich that they could buy weapons and shoot for the hell of it. No one, at that time in the village, was displaying weapons or shooting. Even if the village had no police station and no other representative of the state besides the forest ranger and the priest. And the papa's son, who seemed a very good boy, was in our company. And another detail that I must mention, because it shows the distance that separated that way of life from the way of life in Athens that I knew, was that people did not spend money except on necessities, like sugar and coffee from the grocer. Raki with meze, roasted chickpeas, cost only one and a half drachmas. I had also come down with a thousand. I didn't get a chance to spend it in the village. I had spent money on the tickets alone.

Although later when I learned about the other, bad side of Crete, I lost my interest in anything Cretan, at that time I was interested in getting to know Crete. And in that village I had been given this opportunity, because it was a poor village and therefore kept some traditions, such as the traditional dressing of men with black breeches and a scarf. My friend's grandfather wore black breeches and a black Cretan scarf. He lived in a house that had only one floor and a loft. The floor of the house was pressed soil. There wasn't running water in the house. The bedroom was in the loft, where you went by a wooden ladder, which ended in a hatch. The grandfather usually slept on the benches that surrounded the room below, which was used as living room. And this one had a fireplace where the cooking was done, just like in the house of my friend who hosted me. By the

House there was a stable, where the donkey, Pele, and two goats lived. I remember with nostalgia my friend's grandfather who was a very calm person and very low-key and always tried to "get a laugh" from the group, as they say. The grandfather had only come once in his life to Greece (so he said, since he did not consider Crete Greece), and that was when he had been a soldier during the First World War. His life, then, was to leave every morning with the goats and the donkey and take them to pasture. They didn't have a TV. And the couple's most common food was "cabbage" (greens) that grandma picked, and hard mizithra cheese, so hard you had to have strong teeth to chew it. And the cheese was theirs from the milk of the goats as was the oil they put on the greens. Grandpa didn't smoke any cigarettes either. Grandma didn't, of course, and although she was hunched over with age, she was walking up and down the elevations of the village with her cane. By eating healthily, the grandmother lived over eighty years. She could hardly hear, so she never learned my name. I never saw her dance. But I had seen the next Easter since the Easter I first went, the grandfather, who knew how to dance the syrto in a very slow but correct way.



With Savvas , his mother and his younger brother in the castle of Rethymno. Together with Savva's brother, next year, I would tour all the Crete

The end of a student's communist "career" - The search for the "mythical" anarchists

After my first trip to Crete it was only natural to hang out with Savvas much more than before, and also with his younger brother. But, before I continue about my life

with Savvas , let's go back to my political, let's say, activities. So, I was tired of my position in the collective that produced the "Workers' Struggle", i.e. remaining a "probationary member" of the K.D.K.E. and not to take part in the making of the decisions, even when they directly concerned me, such as the participation in the Panteio student elections, where I participated without wanting to, obeying the so-called "democratic centralism" that characterized the functioning of all communist parties. That's why one fine day, after the publication by the collective of an announcement about student fees, which came out without being asked or even told anything, I went to the offices of "Labor Struggle" and protested to Felekis. Felekis treated me the way communist organizations that are not in power always treat dissenters. Specifically: If you want to stay, stay, if you don't want leave. When I invoked my contribution to the collective until then and my willingness to give more, I found in front of me Mania, who, to my objections, neither more nor less, replied that the "Workers' Struggle" is not a charitable institution, where someone can resort to in order to solve his personal problems. Of course, after such treatment, I decided to sever my relations with the "Workers' Struggle" and seek political expression elsewhere. Already, I had heard something about the existence of anarchists and especially about a certain Konstantinidis, who with his people got involved in riots and was beaten by the police. I remember Felekis jokingly telling his son-in-law Abavis that Konstantinidis "his back itches to be beaten". Nevertheless, I took quite a while to acquire contacts with this political tendency. Perhaps my first contact was my visit to the bookstore "Octopus Press" that Teos Romvos had opened in Koletti. I was impressed by two things there: First, that some newspaper said on the front page that if someone didn't have money to pay for it, he could steal it, and secondly, that inside the bookstore you saw people with very long black hair and beards. One of them, perhaps the tallest, was Romvos. I met him later again. By then I had talked a little with him and he had learned my face, something that served me after a while. Specifically, it served me during extended episodes in downtown Athens but I don't remember if it was the episodes of 23rd July 1975 or the 25th May 1976. By then I was surrounded by two MAT platoons (Order Restoration Units), of which one was going up Koletti street and the other was going down. I had nowhere to go and knocked on the door of the bookstore because I had seen that there was a person inside. Romvos opened the door for me and offered me shelter without objection, leading me to the back of the bookshop so that I wouldn't be seen from outside by the cops. Some time later I met a fellow student of mine, Vassilis Panagiotakopoulos, who had told me that he had some cooperation with Romvos and Octopus Press. He was at the same school year as me but he was always very comfortable which I suppose was due to his good financial situation. I remember that at some point he also opened a bookstore but I don't remember if it was in the 70's or 80's. Later I learned that he had met personally Vassilis Tsironis,

about whom I will talk below, and that in the anarchist milieu he was known as "Vasilas".



The Octopus Press bookstore in Koletti, in 1975, after a fascist attack. The man with long hair and beard is Teos Rhombos

With my School in my first year, academically, I did very well. That is, I got a scholarship of 12,000 drachmas again, as I wrote before. Now that I think about it since, at the time, I was living with my family and not paying bills, I can't understand how I wasted that money. Because, for that time, it was much money. The minimum salary of the employee was then around 6,000 drachmas a month. And as if I had no money, that summer I went again and worked for my father. But this work I did for my father also had its lucky charms. I met my father's worker, who in the early 1960s drove the truck, the Bedford: Michalis. Although my father did not keep, by then, the factory working continuously, hired Michalis for a day now and then. Michalis then did another job: He had rented a vegetable garden in Chalandri with his brother and father and grew various vegetables there, which he sold to restaurants. His father and his brother together with his wife, in fact, lived in a small house in the garden. I, after meeting Michalis, became his friend and offered to work in the afternoons, after the work at the factory, in the vegetable garden. Thus, there was a time when I also worked as a gardener, an occupation that lasted a few months but, because it was combined with my acquaintance with Michalis's family, it left me with indelible memories of a time that I remember with nostalgia.



In Michalis' vegetable garden

Agricultural work in a rich suburb of Athens and unforgettable moments with her gardener's family

The nostalgia is owed to my acquaintance with Michalis' family, since every day, after the work in the garden, Michalis took me to his house and set the table for me. This way I was able to see a girl so beautiful, his older daughter, that in the end I fell in love with her. Is there anything better than being able to see a person you've fallen in love with, every day? But I also had a good time with Michalis. With the food we also drank some wine and in some phases we even sang. Michalis was a good man. All his life, until I met him, he worked as a manual laborer to support his family. His wife also worked, doing manual work in houses, because they had three children to raise. His family was not broken up, as the "Communist Manifesto", which I had recently read then, presents the workers' families. On the other hand, Michalis, being a good person and a worker, unknowingly fueled my laborism, according to which the workers are the good people who will make the revolution and thus save themselves and society from suffering. Having Michalis' family as a role model, I thought it worth devoting my life to the service of the working class.



With Michalis at his house after work

Laborer of a tenant of my father

The work for my father lasted until the beginning of winter. Then my father had no work to give me, so I got a job with one of his tenants, Papoulias, who was renting a part of the factory. He, as a boss, was very good, judging not by his attitude towards me, who was his landlord's child, but by his attitude towards his other worker who worked as a cutter. I was the cutter's assistant. The bad thing is that as a business, his business was not doing well and he was having a hard time paying our daily wages and rent. When I worked for this tenant of my father I did not go to Michael's vegetable garden every day. After all, it was winter and the watering, with which I was occupied when I went to the garden, was often done by the rain. I had never paid attention to the rain until that time. Because, rain or sunshine, my life went on as normal. But with the vegetables it was not like that. That whole summer I had spent opening and closing flower beds so that they would be watered by the water from the furrows and then the water could be channeled to the adjacent flower beds. All my work was watering, except for a few times when I weeded flower beds. However, watering is not needed when it rains. That is why I will never forget one afternoon when the weather was about to rain and those of us working in the vegetable garden had gathered under a shed when the first sprinkles fell. We begged for rain to save hours of work under the sun and in the dirt. And it rained! Since then I see the rain as a blessing, but that doesn't mean I don't resent it when an outdoor event is postponed because of it or I have clothes spread out. Sometimes, in fact, I think that in order to rain I have to spread out clothes, because it often happens that the weather is good, I put the washing machine in and when it is finished and I hang out the clothes, the weather turns bad and it starts raining.

I used to go to my father's tenant until the middle of winter. This situation had disturbed my father who saw me working as a manual laborer in the cold, while he, all his life, was building a fortune that he knew would be left to his children. Then I had heard him say to Papoulias that the factory was intended for me, because for his other son he was not worried about how he would get by, since he would become a doctor. As luck would have it, I owe my survival to this factory. In the end, I didn't continue working until the end of winter, because Papoulias didn't have a job. I also didn't go to the vegetable garden, because of winter. Only sometimes at Michalis' house, to drink some wine and admire the beauty of his daughter. After such an intense period of my life, I found myself sitting and not knowing what to do to ease my stubborn mood for intense life. I had a terrible nervousness and had no appetite for anything. I was going to the School and I couldn't wait for the lesson to start. When it started, I couldn't wait for it to be over. I kept looking at my watch. This was my situation all day, every day. It was only when I was sleeping that I calmed down, but when I woke up I felt hopeless because I didn't feel like doing anything, but I also couldn't stay in bed all day. I was nervous. Until this situation cost me some nervous breakdown, as we shall see below.

A strange seizure and a vertigo that lasted for weeks – My acquaintance with Antipsychiatry

So, one evening when I returned from the "Kyttaro" club, where I had gone with Savvas' little brother to see Giannis Markopoulos in his program, in which he personally participated, like the then unknown Sidiropoulos, and I arrived at home I began to hear a constant sound, which no one else could hear. The next day I couldn't get out of bed because I was dizzy. Then I had, as I have said before, my own room and my family did not see me often. Besides, my mother didn't pay attention to the sound I was hearing and since I didn't even have a fever, she thought that sooner or later the vertigo would pass. She had suggested to me at some stage, since I thought I had a mental problem, that we go together to her own psychiatrist who occasionally prescribed tranquilizers for her. I didn't want to and the situation was dragging on. Until after a week or so we went to the psychiatrist and he wrote me something, I think. I must have taken it but the vertigo was still going on, so we decided to go to our family pediatrician, Mr. Toundas, even though I was almost 20 years old. Toundas, cool, gave me some pills and said that we had gone to the psychiatrist wrongly, because if we had gone to him from the beginning, he would have had the solution for my mental problems as well. Meanwhile I had stopped listening to the sound. So when

I took the Tunda pills and the vertigo stopped I got up from the bed and started going to Panteio again. What still bothered me was not my nervousness, which was no longer so intense, but my lack of interest in life. Until one day I picked up and read a book by the psychiatrist Ronald Laing whom I knew from my previous readings. The book was "The Divided Self" and it was about schizophrenia. In this book I saw that the reason we feel alien to our life, with the consequence that it has no interest for us, is that others do not confirm our existence. When others act as if we don't exist, then we too feel like we don't exist for anyone and are strangers to our lives. As an example, Laing mentioned the case of "Gelsomina" from the film "La strada" by Fellini. Gelsomina felt nonexistent until she met an acrobat who confirmed her existence. When he was killed by Gelsomina's boss, Gelsomina went mad. Laing reports that a patient of his with elements of a schizoid personality recovered after watching this film. I recovered from my existential problems by reading Laing's book. I remember walking the streets outside Panteio and thinking that being alive and walking is better than not existing at all.

A failed attempt to become a "man" - The Cretan entertainment centers

Now that I'm older and no doubt wiser, I realize that my problem at the time was that I didn't have sex. This is not to say that I had not made efforts to overcome this problem. I even did what a former classmate of mine (the one with the streaking and the question about the brothel at the Agrinio stand) advised me, that is to go to a prostitute ("whore" in his terminology). Because he had humiliated me, when he found that I had not made love until then, I took him seriously and had gone. I had found a distressed wretch working in Sophokleous street who would be at least 20 years older than me and very broke. At the hotel that she sent me, I pre-paid (I think a small sum) and then she came and expected me to make love to her within five minutes, like porn clients do. When he saw that such a thing was no fun, she asked me if it was my first time. And when I said yes, she told me that she had been doing this job since she was 10 years old and that if I wanted to succeed another time, I would have to go see pornographic films in the cinemas. She also told me, that when I try to make love, I should see the woman as nothing, as an object. Luckily I never followed her advices. And I didn't do such a stupid thing again as to go to a prostitute. In fact, for many years now, I have been in favor of banning prostitution by prosecuting porn clients.

In 1976, I hung out with Savvas and his younger brother most of the time, although I didn't use to see them often. His brother then, although he was young, about 16 years old, he worked in a laboratory and earned some money.

He made sure that whatever money he had was wasted in the Cretan music clubs. Because I had saved some money from my work in the marbles, I could accompany him. Savvas was also coming, so we could dance as a group. We used to go to Cretan music clubs to dance Cretan dances, since after my trip to Crete I had started listening to Cretan music and learning Cretan dances from Savvas.

Sometimes others from Savva's family came with us, such as his older brother and a sister, around my age. Savva's brother must have been far-right, because on the one hand his father had fought against the communists in the Civil War and he was receiving at home a newspaper for veterans of the anti-communist struggle, and on the other hand, once, as we were going to a club in Aspra Chomata, he saw a placard of K.N.E. and turned it over. This made me react and "put him in his place". Another time we found ourselves in an underground center, the three brothers, the sister and I, among a group of about twenty people including a policeman who worked as security for dignitaries. For some reason, supposedly because some girl from our table was teased in the toilets by someone of the neighboring table, the guys from our table, including Savva's older brother and the policeman, came out of the tavern and had a fist fight with the guys of the neighboring table. When the police came, they arrested the policeman who declared himself to be responsible for the fight. After a few hours they let him go without doing anything to him.

The demonstrations and riots of the 23rd July 1975 and the 25th May 1976: Athens full of roadblocks made of building materials!

In 1976 I no longer had relations with the "Labour Struggle". I had started reading books from the "International Library" which was known as an anarchist publishing house. One of the first I read must have been Guy Debord's "Society of Spectacle". I don't remember how I found out about the existence of this book. But I remember that at that time I also spent some time with Kostas Abavis, the son-in-law of Felekitis whose mother's house was near mine, and we discussed the pros and cons of anarchy in relation to Trotskyism. Kostas, while he used to be an anarchist, as he said, had then become a Trotskyist. I had gone from a Trotskyist to an anarchist, so we had reasons to disagree and each to defend his choices. I remember that I used to read books such as "Society of Spectacle" to have arguments in my discussions with Kostas. Organizationally, I had not yet found a contact with the anarchists, so my political activity was limited to participation in demonstrations, because even in Panteio the assemblies that used to have a political interest had degenerated into purely syndical ones. One of those demonstrations that will remain unforgettable to me was the demonstration on the 25th of May. I had not come down from Chalandri to the demonstration that was taking place for the withdrawal of Law 330/1976 which limited labor rights.

But when I learned that extensive episodes are being made, I got off. I remembered the episodes on July 23 of the previous year and wanted to relive moments of rebellion, as I thought the episodes are. On that day, July 23, there were widespread incidents that lasted until the evening. There must have been unfinished buildings in the center of Athens at that time, because otherwise it cannot be explained that the main roads were blocked by huge barricades made with building materials. The police to suppress the demonstrations used special armored vehicles, the "Avres", from the turret of which the cops fired tear gas, smoke canisters and, in rare cases, suffocation canisters. The protesters faced the police with stones. A shower of stones was hurled at each Aura to hit the cop who, projecting from the turret, was throwing tear gas from a launcher. On that day (July 23) a policeman from an Avra's tower, at the junction of Patisia and Marni streets, in order to punish me for throwing stones had marked me with his launcher. I caught up and dived to the edge of the sidewalk or I would have been hit. On the same road, in Patision, at some other stage we were surrounded by the M.A.T. from both sides and, to escape, we had entered an apartment building. The M.A.T.'s had entered from behind us. and they were going up the floors by the stairs, because the elevator was occupied by me and a couple of others. We went up and down with the elevator to avoid being caught, until we took refuge in a fifth floor apartment, if I remember correctly, that was opened to us. In the episodes that lasted all day, I also had "shelters" to take a break. One was the apartment of my uncle Meltos, where I was always welcome. That's why I stayed in Athens until the night, when the episodes ended.

On May 25, 1976, I had taken refuge from an engulfment at the offices of the "Labor Struggle" in Emmanuel Benaki. On the same road, which was closed by a series of successive barricades, someone happened to bring a box of cold cokes at the barricade where I was. But there was no opener, so I volunteered and opened them with my teeth. And I almost didn't drink but, fortunately, the one who had given him the last, gave me to drink half of it. At the same roadblock, another person had given it to me because I was smoking. I was impressed by that, because he said to me: "Here, man, we're choking on tear gas and you're smoking"? It was as if the smoke from my own cigarette was so strong that it enhanced the effectiveness of the tear gas. I remember that the barricades of Benaki started to loosen, when the police brought in fire engines, on the one hand to put out the fires that had been lit on the barricades to neutralize the tear gas, and on the other hand to disperse the protesters by dousing them. That's where I must have seen molotov cocktails being thrown for the first time. They had been thrown against a fire brigade that was trying to break us up by throwing water at us. That night I decided to go home when in Benaki the barricades had either been removed or abandoned and only a group of demonstrators with a bearded man in a red jacket holding a Molotov cocktail, remained. He was going towards Alexandra's avenue

shouting "Anarchy here and now". After some years I got to know this protester personally.

In these episodes the cops killed a woman by trampling her with an Avra, Anastasia Tsivika. She must not have had relatives, because not only were the cops who killed her not punished, as is usually the case because they are a "state within a state", but the newspapers also did everything they could to defame her without a problem. They wrote down what her killers told them, specifically that she was a beggar and had only one broom in her bag. The extreme left, namely the Maoists and the Trotskyists, were held responsible for the incidents, and thus 12, I think, publishers of left-wing publications, including Felekis, ended up in court. At their trial, which I made sure to attend, most of them did not care at all about the indictment and took advantage of the opportunity given to them to set forth their revolutionary ideas. The judges did not have the power to stop them, so this trial, instead of lowering the morale of the wider subversive movement, raised it. It raised it for one more reason: The accused were acquitted.

The tour of Crete by a Athenian student and a Cretan worker who "counted even the penny"

The summer of 1976 must have been when, together with the little brother of Savvas, I went around all of Crete. I got to know Chania, I walked the gorge of Samaria, I slept in Agia Roumeli, I went by boat to Sfakia which was a necropolis with many demolished houses, and from there we went to the border of the prefecture of Chania with the prefecture of Rethymno which we crossed by hitchhiking in a truck with many other European tourists, because a long-distance bus did not connect the prefectures of Chania and Rethymno in the south. The lorry driver had his own cafe at the end of the route which was the next village, and as it was summer and very hot, after such a journey in the lorry there were many who took refreshments from his shop. That is why his truck was parked on the other side of the "border" and transported tourists for free. The end of the truck's route was the village of Ano Rodakino.

There, in the coffee shop, we had chanced upon someone who had participated in the kidnapping of my friend's mother by his (my friend's) father, which led to their marriage, and he treated us to a lot of raki (local spirit). My friend had a portable radio cassette player with him and we even danced. But when the feast was over and we were waiting to be accommodated, as we had been told, those who would have given us a home disappeared and we were forced to sleep in the nearby forest. And we hadn't really slept, because nearby there was a tavern with music that was playing until morning. Since then I stopped trusting Cretan hospitality. From Kato Rodakino we went to Agia Galini and from there to Phaistos and from Phaistos to Matala.

Matala in the 60s were a beach where hippies from all over the world met and that was the reason my friend and I had decided to visit it. There, next to the sea, we had found a stone hill full of caves. These caves had previously been the dwellings of hippies, who had made in them rooms and painted them. Even terraces for sleeping were carved into their walls. We also slept in such a cave with carved terraces. We didn't have enough money for such a long trip, so we didn't miss opportunities to save money. It was nice in the cave above the sea, where we lit candles and listened to songs from my friend's radio cassette player. The bad thing is that that day I had lost my glasses, in an attempt to bathe in the sea of Matala, which had huge waves. I had tried three times to get in but the wave was throwing me out. Last time I also lost my glasses and never tried again. I had five degrees of myopia and had no spare glasses with me. So I had to continue the tour of Crete together with my Cretan friend without glasses. And out of stubbornness I continued. So we also went to Knossos and Agios Nikolaos and Sitia. In Sitia, where we stayed in a hotel, my pants also had been torn from behind and I had neither spare ones nor money to buy another pair. With what I had, I intended to fly back to Athens, since my friend would be staying in Crete and I didn't want to make the tiring and uncomfortable boat trip without glasses. Nevertheless, I didn't put it down until we reached the end of our route: The Vai Palm Forest. From there we returned together to Heraklion and he went to his village and I took a plane to Athens. It was the first time in my life that I got on a plane and I was already twenty years old. Over the course of the rest of my life, I found that the plane had always been an expensive means of transportation for me, as it would have been for my parents, so I was slow to get on a plane. I cannot close the description of this trip, which was also the longest tour I had done in Greece since the school six-day trip in 1974, without mentioning the unpleasant, let's say, side of it: We missed the other sex a lot. Everywhere we went we saw beautiful girls from Europe and we didn't even talk to them. My friend didn't know any foreign languages, so whenever he tried to talk to them he couldn't understand what they were saying. I, who knew enough English and a little French, was embarrassed to speak to them. I continued to feel shy approaching unknown women throughout my life.

A year after the Stalinist Mao died, anarchists clash with Maoists - The movement to prevent the extradition to Germany of Rolf Pole

When I returned to Athens, I started going to the demonstrations organized by the anarchists. Then they had caught in the Constitution Square a n internationally wanted German city guerilla, Rolf Pole. He had been imprisoned and would be taken to court, to decide whether he would be extradited to

Germany, which was requesting him, or whether he would be granted political asylum. All the opposition parties were on the side of Pole. At that time the government was New Democracy. The anarchists who had formed a committee for this purpose were the protagonists in the support movement in Pole. The committee had organized a demonstration, which I had attended. We were not more than fifty people and the demonstration was forbidden by the police.

Because the demonstrators did not disperse despite the exhortations of the police, we were attacked by the M.A.T. and they broke us up. I, in my attempt to avoid capture by two M.A.T. platoons. when one was going down and the other was going up Tositsa, I climbed the bars of the Polytechnic whose doors were closed and jumped into the middle. I wasn't caught, but twelve people were caught, including a girl, Filio. None of those arrested went to prison and I never saw Filio again in 1977, in Exarchia, nor did I hear anything about her again. How many people have fallen into the hands of power in their efforts to fight for a better life and it has not been recorded even by history, even if it is something unusual! I say this because the anarchist milieu was then male-dominated and therefore the women who were caught in anarchist demonstrations were a rare species. Among those arrested was also the protester in the red jacket that I had seen on May 25. Before he was caught, I had seen him holding the protest banner. Regarding Pole, the court chaired by Christos Sargetakis, who was one of the most well-known judges who got involved in the Lambrakis case and helped uncover the culprits, rejected Germany's request for Pole's extradition. But the case was transferred to the Supreme Court, which overturned the court's decision and accepted Germany's request for extradition. So Pole found himself back in German prisons, from where he had escaped before coming to Greece. And there he spent several years.

A memory from a legendary figure: My acquaintance with the co-founder and head of the "International Library" Christos Konstantinidis

I would very much like, then, to find a way to join the anarchist milieu organizationally. Unfortunately, I had to wait, because I only knew one person who defined himself as an anarchist, a Kostas (not Abavi) from Chalandri and he did not have many connections with the area. But he knew the "International Library", the first anarchist publishing house in Greece, and its manager Christos Konstantinidis, about whom Felekitis had said that "his back was itching to be beaten". That is why Kostas took me one day and we went to the offices of "Diethnis" which were on the seventh (last) floor of an apartment building in Akadimia's avenue, behind the church of Zoodochos Pigi. There, indeed, we found Konstantinides, with long hair and a beard too, who talked a little with me, because he saw that I already knew

something about politics. From the first conversation I had with him I found him to be a formidable orator. He was a pleasure to listen to. I had never heard such an orator before. What I was left with from the discussion is that "power corrupts". How many times have I been given the opportunity to find it out since then... I left having bought Stina's "Workers' Parties, Workers' States and the Liberation Movement of the Working Class" as well as all the issues of "Pavement" that had appeared up to that time (the magazine published by "International Library").

Konstantinidis, I later saw him "in action" in some trial. I remember two trials from that time. I admired him in the second. In the first, four anarchists were on trial for a fire they had lit in Exarchion Square. The defendants had said that because it was winter and cold, they had lit a fire to keep warm and that no one was in danger from that fire. The defendants were ultimately sentenced with a stay of appeal, appealed and did not go to prison. Among them was a very calm man, tall and thin with aphana hair, who had been nicknamed Maharaji because of his calmness. Later, he was to play a decisive role in my life.

Midnight trials of ideologues, whose ideology was "unknown" to the judges: The trial for the banner that read "DOWN WITH THE STATE"

In the second trial, seven young men and a girl were on trial for a banner they had made and temporarily left on the balcony of a law office, on the fifth floor of an apartment building in Gladstonos street near Kaningos Square. They had written on the banner "Down with the state" and for that they had been brought to trial under the charge of "insulting authority". The girl was Sophia who, together with her friend George, I met later, as we will see below. In the near future she was going to play a decisive role in my life! Like the previous trial I mentioned above, this one too took place very late at night with the consequence that, when it ended in the early hours of the morning, there was no bus to go back to Chalandri. And I didn't have money for a taxi. However, it worthed the while that I stayed until the end. It was an eventful trial. The defendants claimed they were anarchists but the judge pretended he didn't know what anarchism was. Then George, Sophia's friend, when it was time to apologize, said that dozens of anarchist books have been published in Greece and that even their publisher is in the room. This made

Christos Konstantinidis, who was that editor, stand up among the audience and say to the judges: "Who are you to judge us?" and "You have no right to judge us." Konstantinidis' intervention enraged the judge who had "never heard of anarchism" and asked the police, who were inside the courtroom, to catch Konstantinidis and detain him to be tried for "insult of court", after the end of the trial that was taking place. The judge's order to catch Konstantinidis did

one of the anarchists in the audience, dressed in worn blue jeans (trousers and jacket) adorned with colorful accessories and nicknamed "George the Freak", to have a seizure and fall to the floor and tremble. This led to a halt in the trial until George the Freak was calmed. Shortly afterwards the trial resumed and ended with all the accused being sentenced to eleven months in prison for contempt of authority. But the appeal that was made immediately after, had a suspensive effect and they were released. When, after some months, the appeal was heard, the prosecutor Tsevas had requested the acquittal of the accused and the court accepted his proposal and acquitted them. Konstantinidis was eventually released without trial, and together with a large part of the audience, including myself, we ended up in a cafe in Omonia, which made yogurt with honey. It had a loft, in which we all climbed and sat down. We almost all ordered yogurt with honey and some payed for the others. I was among those who payed for the others. I returned to Chalandri in a hurry with the first morning bus. It was one of the first outings of my life that lasted all night long , of which, in general, there have been very few in my entire life.

The end of my first "romance", the passage of a "traveler" from the Greek army and a job that reminded me of the English working class life in the 19th century

I don't remember when I stopped going to my friend Michalis' house, because at that time I rarely went. I remember, however, that I had offered to help his daughter, the eldest, who was in the second year of high school, with Ancient Greek. The one I had fallen in love with. During these lessons, thinking that she was also interested in me, I told her father that I wanted to marry her. He referred me to her mother, who asked if my parents knew. When I told her that I had informed my mother, she said she would think about it and call. He actually called my mother and told her something very normal: That the girl was still young and should continue school, grow up, and then we would see each other. I, seeing my hopes that I would unite my life with the life of the girl, to be lost, stopped going to their house. Certainly, I would not be seen as before. The girl, since then, I saw her again after some months on a bus, where she was with her sister. We talked a little about unrelated matters but not about what had happened. I haven't seen her since. I kept her in my memory as beautiful as a doll as she was when she was fourteen years old. Now that I remember these things I feel that I was someone to laugh with but more for crying with.

Now, I was in the third year of Panteio and I had decided not to hurry to finish the School, so as not to join the army. I had already "passed touring" as they called it then, namely I had been for two consecutive days to Roof's camp, where they examined my knowledge and my physical health, stripping me completely, as well

as the other conscripts, something I did not like at all. Out of the fifty or so people we were "touring" together, only six were students, including me. We, on the second day, were made to fill in the tabs with the details of the rest. To the question put to me, before I left the camp, by an officer, as to what I wanted to enlist, I had answered in the artillery, as my father had told me. Many years later, when I was called up to serve, I saw that I had been assigned to the armored cars!

Not intending to attend my faculty's lessons, I decided to look for a job from the advertisements in "Nea", which at that time had most of them. There were no classifieds-only newspapers back then. Of the jobs I found for unskilled workers (as I was looking for) I was accepted at a cotton gin in Nea Ionia. I had previously applied for a job in a textile factory in a place outside of Athens, where I had been taken in a truck along with many others who, like me, were hoping to be hired.

Among the candidates for unskilled workers we also had six women. They were the only ones they had taken, after all, to the textile factory. The truck took all the rest of us and returned us, somewhere in Nea Ionia, from where it had taken us.

At the gin, the shift was from three in the afternoon to ten in the evening, and that's why I liked it. I always hated getting up in the morning and never got used to it. Fortunately my life afforded me the luxury, most of the time, of not getting up in the morning. I have to say a few things about this job. As soon as I went, they put me in the seed. Many, perhaps all, who reported for work were put to the test. It was very tedious work: On the ground floor of the building there were huge warehouses filled almost to the ceiling with seed. That is, the distance of the seed from the ceiling should not have been more than two meters. We were working with our feet in the seed. From large holes in the ceiling, pipes led into the warehouses, which continuously brought out seeds. Our job was to evenly spread the seeds that came out of the tubes, so that they didn't all collect under the mouths of the tubes and clog them. All the time we were with a shovel in our hand and we were pulling up the seeds that our pipe was dropping. In the pipe where I worked, a man in his fifties also worked with me, who at the time I saw as an old man and I told my family that I was working with an old man. But when I reached fifty, I didn't like being called old. The work was so tedious that many new workers did not stay more than a few days. Some worked only a few hours and then left, never to return. I, although I was getting tired, had no intention of leaving. After all, I was used to heavy work from my work in marble. I remember that, on the first day that I had taken a job at Papoulias, I had thrown away with the cart 23 loads of rubble, namely mud with marble dust and pieces of marble. A cart loaded with rubble from marble processing is no easy task. Of course, I did not intend to always work as a Stakhanovite (so they called the soviet "heroes of labor").

I just wanted the new boss, Papoulias, to have a good idea about me.

Fortunately, I didn't have to spend too long working on the seed. Our foreman liked my industriousness and he took me upstairs, in the room where the huge machines were that did the ginning, to work in the press. The press job was easy. I had to watch the press and every time it pressed the cotton into a big block, take the block, which the press had already bound, out of the press and carry it on a wheelbarrow to the warehouse. I did what I could, after all I wasn't working alone. People older than me worked there. I can't say that I did anything more than the others but the foreman thought I was very hardworking and at a certain stage when the machines were jamming because they weren't being fed by enough gin for ginning, the foreman, as more industrious, sent me over to help with the supply. There, for the first time in my life I saw how a job can be hell. It was a large room filled with scattered cotton that had seeds and at one point, in the middle of the room, there was a large pipe that sucked up the cotton and carried it to the machines. Our job was to feed the tube with rakes. We raked it into the pipe and others raked it from further away. But the tube absorbed the cotton very quickly and it was very difficult to keep it full. If it was left without cotton, the machines that were below would stick. In order for them not to stick, we had to work like crazy, namely very quickly. And there was no time to "breathe", i.e. to smoke any cigarettes. This work was so exhausting that no Greeks worked in supplying the machines. The only people working there were Arabs. And they didn't stay for long. As it was with those who labored in the seed. That's why Gasparatos' gin (that's the businessman's name) had a permanent advertisement in the news, asking for unskilled workers. At that stage, after an hour, I went downstairs and told the foreman that I could not do this job. He put me back in the press and "I found my peace".

A persistent effort pays off: I come into organizational contact with the anti-authoritarian milieu even though I was suspected of being an informer, because I did not belong to any group

I liked this job, although it didn't leave me time for anything else, because I found it easier than working on the marbles, and because it was in the afternoon. I took the Agia Paraskevi-Agios Anargyri bus and from Chalandri I was in Nea Ionia in less than half an hour. The same when I was returning. I was at home by 11 at night at the latest. And I didn't think about the fact that I didn't have a girlfriend, or that I didn't see friends, or that I didn't go to Panteio. After all, in Panteio I planned to stay a few more years to avoid the army. Ever since I was working on the marbles, I had found that psychologically manual work was lighter than mental work because

it did not require you to strain your mind. It also freed you from unpleasant thoughts, since instead of thinking about your crap, you were thinking about work. The ability of work to combat mental problems has also been recognized by psychiatry and treatment with work is called "Occupational Therapy". I, at the time, had never heard of occupational therapy, but I understood for myself the value of work in combating unpleasant thoughts. For all the above reasons I intended to stay in this job for a long time. But the "goddess Fortune" and my will to fight for equality and freedom, had an opposite opinion. So, before I could complete two weeks at work, my anarchist friend from Chalandri, Kostas, showed up at my house and told me that, if I was still interested in joining the anarchist milieu, there was a group of discussions, aiming to form an organization. The discussions took place in the afternoon, at 5 o'clock, so I had to choose either discussions or work. Without much thought, with a Christian self-denial that characterized my relationship with the movement at the time, I decided to sacrifice work! Now that I look at life behind me like an open book, I think that this sacrifice was worth it because of its later consequences. However, at the time I did not know the consequences and therefore the loss of my job had cost me dearly.

So, one fine autumn afternoon, together with Kostas, I ended up in an apartment on Troias Street, I think, whose doorbell read "Spyridoula". I, at the time, thought that this was the name of a woman who lived in the apartment, but while I was going to the discussions, I did not meet any Spyridoula. Years later I learned that "Spyridoula" was the name of a musical group, whose creators, two brothers, lived in this apartment and took part in the discussions. Anyway, when we entered the room where the discussion was taking place, we found quite a crowd, about ten to twenty people. Kostas was well-known, but I wasn't, so a smartypants butted in and said about me: "How do we know he is not an informer"? Kostas vouched for me and some others covered him so I stayed. Now, after 39 years of thinking about what happened, I know that the anarchist milieu is the easiest one for informers to infiltrate, and the state has every reason to push informers into it, because of its dynamics and its danger. It is also the safest for cheaters, because there are no systematic methods to reveal them.

The discussions took place at least once a week and I was never absent. In fact, even though I was coming from Chalandri, I was always punctual. The rest, except one, were inconsistent and came quite a while later. This one, taller than me and with long hair, would "become a hero" in the future. He distinguished himself as a "martyr" for anarchy, losing in the struggle one of his arms and one of his eyes. I don't remember him, however, then saying much in the discussions. The one who spoke the most was a blond bald man with the face of a saint, like those you see painted in icons. That is why some had given him the nickname Saint

Basil, since his name was Basil. But I have to admit that I was also talking a lot. I had this bad habit since I was in school. That's why in high school, when at some point a teacher told us each of us to choose a classmate and comment on a piece of paper, which we would then give to her, my classmate who commented on me wrote: "Dear friend and classmate you are verbose. This is also bad for life, being laconic is philosophizing." He was called Lolas, this classmate of mine and much later he became the mayor of Vrilissia. Anyway, as long as I stayed in the discussions, my argument with Vassilis was about whether we should rely on the working class, to carry out the revolution, or on all classes. "Cradle that rocked us!", I say today when I remember them. Vassilis supported the working class as the vanguard of the revolution. And the majority in these debates, influenced by Debord's "Society of Spectacle", which was at the height of fashion at the time for anarchists, supported Basil, as Debord and the Internationale Situationniste (the international organization whose Debord was, along with Raoul Vanegem, the most famous intellectual) argued that society would change radically when workers' councils were established. I was "kicking" because I had recently read a part of the book of the American anarchist Murray Bookchin "Post-scarcity anarchism" which had been published in a book in Greek with the title "Listen Marxist!". In this book, Bookchin argued as all theorists of the new left in America did, (the left that prevailed in American universities in the 1960s and had no connection to the Russophile American Communist Party) that the U.S.A. of the 1960s was not the Russia of 1917 and that, in general, in Western societies workers had been largely replaced by machines while those who remained had become bourgeois. Consequently, they had no more reason than the other social strata to revolt, and above all their revolt could not take place because they were hungry. We had already reached the consumer society and the consumer could not be considered the driver of the revolution. These things were obvious to those in touch with reality. My interlocutors, influenced by the dominant after the 1967-1974 dictatorship laborism, did not accept this reality at all. So, before Christmas 1976, I greeted them by telling them that I had found a magazine that expressed me, Nikos Bali's "Otan", and I would look to contact with the magazine's people. I left, but before that I had made an acquaintance, which would play the most decisive role in my life. I had met the couple I mentioned above, George and Sophia. They came to the discussions, without sitting, usually, until the end. George spoke sometimes. Sometimes I happened to leave the conversations with them. How jealous I was of this couple back then... They were leaving and I, when we parted I returned to my loneliness and misery. Later, I saw them again at a demonstration that winter, but I don't remember exactly when and why the demonstration was taking place.

A bookstore employee who was fired for disrespecting the hierarchy

It must have been that winter that I looked for a job and found it as an employee in the warehouse of a publishing house of foreign language educational books, which was on Feidiu Street. I got a job around Christmas when they were doing a census and they needed a lot of staff. I received around 6,000 drachmas a month but this job took a lot of my time, because it was both morning and afternoon and from Chalandri to Kanings and, after work, from Kanings to Chalandri by bus, it took a lot of time. I remember that the warehouse was in the basement of an old building, which always had a problem with the plumbing. As a result, the area where the cash register was (there was a cash register because the wholesale was done from the warehouse) constantly smelled like a cesspool. A girl was working at the cash register. I wonder how she could stand that smell. I worked far from the cash register, so I avoided the smell. After the end of the census my job was to make parcels of books for orders coming from the provinces. I also had to write the invoices that accompanied the parcels. The bad thing is that for tax reasons, the publishing house was shared by four companies and each one sold specific books and gave specific wholesale discounts. Therefore, it was not easy to draw up these invoices. You had to keep asking which company you should bill each book to and what discount to give, until you learned to do the billing and discounts yourself. And I wasn't the only one doing this job. There were others, because it was the time when the Greeks passionately wanted their children to learn foreign languages and for this reason, this publishing house that published learning books or made imports from abroad, had a lot of work. I, as always, was very hardworking and therefore loved by both bosses and colleagues. So loved that once one of the two bosses offered to drive me back to Chalandri in his luxury Jaguar car and I didn't go so I wouldn't be seen as a snitch. And I lent a colleague from Cyprus a thousand drachmas, a significant amount since it was one sixth of the salary. Could I not be loved after that? The bad thing is that I never got that thousand back, even when, after a long time since I stopped working in the warehouse, I found him working in the hotel located in Exarchion Square. And unfortunately I didn't go with a boss's car to Chalandri. If I had capitalized on his interest in me, he would have told his brother (the other boss) a good word for me when he decided to fire me because I protested after he blamed me for some mistake someone else had made. Specifically, it was an error in wholesale discounts on an invoice. My boss yelled at me about the mistake on the invoice, which I hadn't done. I protested and he let me continue my work. But at noon, before we closed, he called me into his office and asked me not to protest again, in the strong way he thought I had protested, even if I was right and he unfair. I did not accept to give up the defense of my right, when I would receive unfair insults. He, in order to convince me, told me

that he had worked very hard to get to the position of superintendent, and specifically that he had been pushing carts with books since he was twelve years old, and therefore demanded that I be silent, even if I was right. I insisted on refusing and he gave me the dilemma of either accepting what he was asking or being fired. I preferred to get fired, doing one more act of stupidity, like the one when I quit my job at the gin to go to the talks, driven by a particularly strong sense of dignity that I have always had in my life and it has cost me dearly so far.

So I was out of a job again and I didn't get severance pay either, because I hadn't completed two months at work, as the law required in order for a fired person to get severance pay. So I started looking for work again and this time I found a job in a lithography shop in Roof.

Unskilled worker in a Lithographic printing shop in Ruf

In the lithographic printing shop at Roof I got a job as an unskilled worker, with the prospect of becoming a lithographer's assistant, namely of the craftsman who operated the offset machines. This lithographic printing shop was quite far from my house and that's why I needed to get up very early in the morning to be there at 8 o'clock, when I got to work. I remember we had cards that we punched into a machine, both when we entered and when we left the printing shop. This is how the employer knew who was on time and who was not. I had to take a bus from Chalandri to Kaninos, from there walk to Koumoundourou square and from there take another bus to Roof. And the bad thing is that every morning the buses were, and are, full of people going to work, so most of the time I went standing up. At least from Koumoundourou to Roof. And in Roof I had to walk again from the bus stop to the factory which was not even close. I remember crossing some streets that smelled very bad, because there were tanneries there. The printing shop was a large two-story building, on the ground floor of which were some large four-color offset machines, and on the first floor there was a bindery, where the books were binded, as well as the manager's office. Mostly women worked in the bookbindery, while downstairs only men. I, while I remained there, all I did was to watch the printing machine, to stop it if there was any confusion in the printing such as to ruin the pages, to supply the cylinders with the four inks (each cylinder and one ink) before the printing started and to wash them when the printing was finished. Although I was on my feet all the time, it seemed very easy and relaxing work, compared to the marbles. And relatively safe. I say relatively because to wash the rollers we had to press the button to make them spin every now and then and once I hurriedly pressed the button and the roller

got my hand in with the sponge I was holding, and could seriously injure it. Luckily I noticed it and pulled it at the last moment as it turned with the reel. I don't remember exactly what my engineer did, namely the master lithographer, to whom I was an assistant. I only remember that he was called Biscini and that he had a permanent tobacco pipe in his mouth, which most of the time it was extinguished, because he couldn't keep smoking to keep it from extinguishing. At 12 every day we also had a break, about half an hour, for eating. The food was brought to us from outside, from a shop, by one of the girls who worked in the bookstore. I liked this worker, as did another one who sometimes went to eat with her, and it annoyed me when the workers, who, in general, are not famous for their tact and politeness, teased her by insinuations. During the months I stayed there, I didn't dare approach either of the girls. Instead, another young man, unskilled like me, who was working on another machine, managed to make it up with another girl from the bookbindery. I have to admit that the female workers who went for the food, heard less insulting words than an old man, around fifty, who was sweeping and generally cleaning the place and doing some other small jobs. Almost everyone teased him and the manager who also supervised us workers kept yelling at him. The only person this old man had a couple of conversations with was me. The other workers, contrary to what they did to the old man, respected me because I was a student. This old man was very kind and from what I remember, he had spent years in France. At that time he was living with his mother.

And in this job I did not manage to stay long and this time it was not due to me. I was laid off after an industry strike. But before I talk about this decisive strike for my career, I must talk about another one, the first strike I took part in. I remember they fired an engineer but I guess no one told me the reason. In order for the dismissal to be revoked, almost all of his colleagues had gone on strike and we had also taken part in a march. However, I am not sure whether we had done the march for him or in the context of the industry strike that took place a few weeks or a month later. I remember, however, that the bookbinding workers had also participated in the strike and that they also participated in the march. I remember it because we had ended up in some theater in Athens, to listen to the trade unionists, and one of the girls I liked was sitting in front of me. She, in the theater, was obliged to listen to the foul language of one of the workers who teased her. Since this strike, however, the engineer had been rehired.

Trade unionist in the first major strike in Greece demanding the five-day 40-hour workday, something that saved me from the thugs of the Communist Youth of Greece

The lithographer industry strike that began in the spring of 1977 was one of the longest and most successful strikes after the dictatorship. This is because on the one hand its demands were attractive enough to draw enough people to strike and they were persistent enough, and on the other hand it was difficult to replace the strikers with others due to the fact that lithography required a lot of expertise.

Another reason was that the leadership of the trade union, led by a certain Beruchis who was formerly a Trotskyist, was difficult to control by the parties that used to call the strikes, like the K.K.E. (communists) or the P.A.S.O.K. (socialists). The demands of the strike were historic, in a sense, because they could be adopted by other branches and were entered for the first time, if I'm not mistaken, by trade unionists in Greece. The lithographers demanded that the working days be reduced to five per week, from six, and that the working hours of the whole week be reduced to 40 from the previous 48. During the strike, I went, at least in the first period, to all the assemblies, which were held in a theater in Athens, and since I knew Felekis and Abavis, who were both lithographers, I also joined the strike committee. With others of the committee I had gone some mornings outside factories, to discourage the few strike-breakers. I remember that one of these factories was Dikaios, on the national road, which was big, modern and took big contracts. The factory where I worked also received large contracts, because I remember that we were constantly printing books for the State-owned Educational Books Publishing Organization. I remember this factory of Dikaios well, because I always see it when I leave Athens, taking the national road in the direction of Lamia. It must have been out of business for many years, because the building I see looks abandoned and in a state of disrepair. Also, my status as a member of the strike committee, which was evidenced by a relevant badge that I had stuck, or pinned (I don't remember exactly), to my shirt, saved me at some point from the KNAT, that is, from the thugs of the Communist Youth of Greece, when I went to hand out some anarchist proclamation at an outdoor event in the courtyard of Panteio, during which Savopoulos had sung "Acharneis". Specifically, as soon as they saw the paper, the KNAT thugs surrounded me with hostile attitudes, to force me to leave Panteio, because I was not, according to them, a worker. I don't remember why I had to be a worker. I told them that not only was I a worker but I was also on the strike committee of the lithographers and I proved it by showing them the badge. I don't know if the truth was enough to leave me alone, because thugs, of all origins, write the truth where the ink won't catch, but a senior member

of P.S.K. (the student faction of the K.N.E.) of a certain age, who knew me since I was active in the student union in Panteio, vouched for me. That's how I escaped from the KNAT.

The demonstration of the anarchists on May Day 1977, a demonstration that became a historic poster, with the "first mute masked man" sung by Nicholas Asimos and "signed" by the Cardinal of Retz

The proclamation I was handing out was a proclamation that we had produced in 10,000 copies, after the May Day incidents of 1977 between anarchists, ekketzides (followers of the E.K.K.E. = Revolutionary Communist Party of Greece) and the police. That May Day, Savvas happened to be at my house and the idea was thrown to go down to the May Day demonstration. We went down together and looked for the anarchists, I don't remember at whose suggestion. We found them in Tositsa st. getting ready to go out to Patision st. When they went out to Patision street, there must not have been more than fifty people, we also went out with them. I happened to be in the front row, facing the police, when suddenly the cops attacked after some provocation by the protesters. I didn't take the challenge lightly and when everyone started running to get away from the cops, I ran too. I was running in Stournari st. heading towards Exarchia, when I saw Savvas coming too. What struck me was that I saw some burly protesters who did not look anarchist because they were wearing conventional clothing, who had surrounded a small young man, like a child, and were beating him. Then someone took him on his shoulder like a sack and shouted to the others to let him go. So they finally let him go. After some time I met this kid and learned that he was an anarchist and those who wanted to lynch him were ekketzides. The reason was that a Molotov bomb had been thrown by the anarchists at the ekketzides, who were also lined up in Patision st., behind the anarchist bloc. From the incidents between anarchists, police and ekketzides, about a dozen ekketzides and I think four anarchists were caught and brought to court in the following days.



The anarchist bloc shortly before the May Day events of 1977. Right, jacket slung over shoulders, me. On the left, the little one with the long hair under the flag, is the comrade the ekketzides were hitting

A few days after May Day, I was walking in Exarcheion Square, when I saw my well-known anarchist couple, namely George and Sophia. After we greeted each other, Sophia told me that there would be an announcement about the May Day demonstration and the events that took place, and if I wanted to participate. I told her I would be more than happy to join and she told me to follow them. We ended up on the top floor of an old building in Ippocratous street, where we found over ten people gathered. Among them was Nikos Balis, whom I knew as the editor of the magazine "Otan" but I was seeing him for the first time. Also Michalis Protopsaltis, who at that time brought out the first issue of the magazine "The rooster that crows in the dark until dawn" and whom I had only seen in court, when he was also tried for the banner "Down with the state". After an unusually, for me, democratic discussion, the text of a proclamation with the title "We are the provocative, the romantic and the angry" was prepared. This proclamation under its title has a quotation from an appeal by Augustus Spies, one of the four anarchists hanged in Chicago in 1886, to the "wage-earning class" to "advance against all its exploiters the one argument which can be effective:

Violence". The idea of the title was Protopsaltis', the idea of the passage mine. I had recently read the book "The Anarchists" by James Joll and remembered that it contained something related. So I suggested to others that we look it up in the book if they had it. They had it and that's how it got in. In general, this announcement was in favor of the violence used in the May Day demonstration by the anarchists. This I distributed in Panteio, because of which the Knites were alarmed.

In those days I was not working because of the lithographers' strike, so I had the comfort of being in Athens every day and mixing with the anarchists. I always found them in the courts that were then in the "Arsakeion" building, where the Council of State is now housed, or at opposite of it traditional building on Santoroza Street, where there were also courtrooms. I don't remember exactly where the trial for the May Day incidents was taking place, but I went and found a lot of people inside the court, a lot of them standing, like on rush hour buses. What had struck me at the time was that in an adjoining room one day I had seen someone talking to anarchists and telling them that in order to attend the trial he was in danger of being caught because there was a warrant for his arrest for another case. A little later I learned that his name was Panagiotis Liveretos. Also, in some of the episodes that took place outside the courts when I was away, the photojournalists had photographed some long-haired anarchist with a brick in each hand, ready to throw them. I met him later with the nickname "Touvlas". He got the nickname because of the photo. Now, as far as the decisions of the court are concerned, I think all four anarchists were acquitted while the ekketzides were sentenced to various sentences, one of them got two, or more than two, years imprisonment.

The efforts of the dreamers who imagined that the specter of anarchy was hovering over the Athens of 1977: The discussion group of Valtetsiou 23 and the "Education Team"

I, from May Day onwards, or rather from the day we issued the proclamation onwards, had met enough with the anarchists and was thus able to organize in this milieu, something I had also sought when I went to "Spyridoula". And since of the existing trends in the area, the one that expressed me the most was that of Nikos Balis, when I was given the opportunity in Exarchia to approach him, given that he knew me from the proclamation, with all my youthful enthusiasm I had proposed to him to form a group and publish a magazine with views like those found in *Otan*, the magazine he had published. After some discussions with others, my idea was heard and it was decided to rent a place in Exarchia and discuss. Indeed, this place on Valtetsiou Street, number 23 I think, was rented. It was a half-ruined building that had a few rooms in the back, which

we could use. The upper floor was torn down, no ceiling just walls and lots of rubbish. In general the whole building was full of rubbish, of which we cleaned those of the corridor leading to the back as well as the rooms we would use. We painted the windows of the rooms black, the colour the anarchists like.



The house rented on Valtetsiou Street for our discussions. Me opposite the entrance to the room where the discussions were taking place. Door and windows painted black

In the discussions that began to take place in this place, I also met the teenager who had escaped being lynched on May Day. His name was George and he had a very innocent appearance. Perhaps that is why he was later nicknamed "Agnos". With him I became very friendly, as we shall see below. Also, my well-known couple, George and Sophia, came to the discussions.

From them, at the same time, I learned that there was another group that had discussions and gathered in an apartment on Phylis Street. The discussions were held in order to publish a brochure with the positions of the anarchists on education, and that is why we called this group the "education group". And since the couple suggested I go, I went. This discussion group consisted of younger people than the Exarchia discussion group. All were under 22 years old and there were more girls. The apartment, where we were talking, was on the ground floor of the apartment building and was rented by a very low-key young man. At least in relation to me, who was one of those who talked the most. The bad thing is that among the people who made up the group, a guy with tufted black hair, wiry but thin to the point of being nicknamed "Bone", had an admiral father, with whom he quarreled. The admiral learned where his son was going and there were anarchists and one day when I went to the apartment for the discussion, I found

some of my colleagues on the street and in front of the entrance of the apartment building a small car with two adults inside. It was, I learned, the admiral with some friend or relative of his and they were waiting for the police he had called to arrive. By the time the police arrived, he was quarrelling with the blond who called him a Turk because, as I learned, he was from Turkey, and the admiral, like a narrow-minded nationalist, therefore held him responsible for seducing his son. Finally the police came and took away the blond who, I learned, they had a hard time believing was Turkish, so blond he was. They didn't take long to let him go, because Kokkalos (Bone) was over 18 years old and the blond a couple of years older. It was ridiculous to charge that the blond of about the same age seduced Kokkalos and turned him into an anarchist. We are talking about this kind of seduction!

Otherwise, the discussions in Valtetsiou continued as normal. One of the speakers, who was also from the original group that decided to start the discussions, was "Kavantzias", who was also one of the most talkative. It was way beyond me. Kavantzias, because he knew from building work, did enough work to make the place habitable. At some stage, in fact, he had rented out the house he lived in, and the few things he had, such as a mattress, he had brought to the discussion place. I, always in need of money, had asked him, if he found any construction work, to call me too. And indeed, he found some work in Chalandri. The night before the day we were going to work, he slept at my house in Chalandri, because my parents and probably my brother were out. The next day, he did most of the work, which was to shovel some dirt. He was taller than me and stockier and it showed. That's why in some demonstration where the anarchists found themselves in front of a KNAT chain, which was preventing us from continuing, Konstantinidis, I remember, had put Kavantza in front and shouted with his loudspeaker: "Kavantza we are moving forward". But, as I expected, the best speaker in the discussions was Nikos Balis. He had a lot of knowledge and read a lot. He knew English very well and for this reason, together with another partner, Iulia Rallidis, he had done translations for a well-known publishing house. In fact, this publishing house had made him responsible for a series of books related to psychiatry and education. Balis, then, must have been around 28. I had heard that he was Konstantinides' age. Now for this Iulia, I had seen Bali one day in Exarcheia square chasing Dalianis, who was a lawyer and in his office the eight people had been caught for the "Down with the state" banner. Dalianis had also published his own books on anarchy, and the people who had been caught participated in a committee, in which Dalianis played a central role: the "Committee against Scientific Oppression". After the arrests of the eight and their parents' protests to Dalianis that followed, the committee disbanded. Dalianis, I had seen in a trial, to be so caustic to the judges that, although he was a lawyer, he was expelled from the courtroom. After the episode in the square I never saw him again. I learned that he later got totally disappointed with life, and ended up in an asylum, where he

spent the rest of his life.

Of the other speakers in the debates, Bali's closest friend was Babis. A strong intellectual as well, he spoke very well. He too must have held Guy Debord in high esteem, because in a proclamation he later drew up for the anniversary of the Polytechnic School rising, he used a style of writing reminiscent of the "Society of the Spectacle." George, Agnos, who I mentioned above, also came to the discussions. I don't remember him speaking, but I remember him in the work we had done to build the space. I spent a lot of time with him and we saw each other every day when I went down to Athens. The strike continued, so I went down to Athens every day. When I learned that it ended with the demands of the strikers being met, namely with the establishment of a five-day, 40-hour work week for the lithographers, I went to the factory where I worked and learned that I had been fired, as had the other unskilled workers. They had kept the engineers because they needed them. So I found myself without a job again. Fortunately, I had put some money aside for the realization of a dream of mine: To leave this country and go to England. And if I could to stay there.



Me and Giorgos Agnos, at the window of the room where the discussions took place, at
Valtetsiou 23

The "troubadours" of the dreamers' movement: Nikolas Asimos and Christos Zygomas

It was in the summer of 1977 that I met both musicians of our milieu, Nikolas Asimos and Christos Zygomas. Asimos had a stall selling books in front of the main entrance of the Polytechnic. Sometimes he might have his guitar with him and play a song for his friends. I saw in Asimos an artist who could contribute with his songs

to spread anarchist ideas. That's why, when at some point he told me that we had to find an abandoned summer cinema for us to rent, I unleashed myself in some north-western districts of Athens to find him a cinema. Unfortunately, I didn't find anything for him, but he appreciated my willingness. Until I met him, he had only released a small 45rpm record, "Mechanism", where he apologizes for resorting to a company to make a record for him. But after we met, he produced a tape, "Illegal tape No. 000001", where he had songs that could be described as political or even anarchist. And this tape was sold together with the books in front of the Polytechnic. Sometimes, instead of him, the books were sold by his partner Lillian, with whom I spoke only once. She was a feminist and at some point I had seen her handing out feminist proclamations in front of the Polytechnic. So we got into a conversation about feminism and I, I remember, disagreed with her about the use of the word "fuck" to describe sexual intercourse. I thought that this word was vulgar and should not be used, while Lillian thought it was not vulgar, since it described a physical act that was commonplace and particularly pleasurable. I don't remember exactly when, but at some point, that summer, Asimos was informed that the bars of the Polytechnic were going to be thrown down, so that the police could enter at any time. He decided to tell me and others to make a proclamation of protest. We gathered in an attic he kept as a warehouse for his books, in Solomou I think. From the discussion emerged what he wanted to be written. I divided my position and when he printed the announcement I didn't distribute it. Its signature was "PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO SUBJECT."

Asimos, like Zygomas, believed at the time that he could raise the level of the public with his songs and spread our ideas, so they both decided to play systematically in venues where the police wouldn't kick them out. At that time such places were Exarcheion Square, the Propylaia of the University of Athens and the grass in front of the National Archaeological Museum. I happened to see Zygomas playing on the grass of the square, on the side of the traditional cafe on the corner with Tsamadou. At that time this cafe was known as Russo's cafe, after the name of the waiter who was called Russo. All the anarchists of the square used to gather there, those who had money for a soft drink or a beer. Zygomas played his excellent songs with his guitar and at the same time with a harmonica that he had adjusted in front of his mouth, like Bob Dylan did in his first steps. Asimos started from the grass in front of the Museum. At that time the steps of the Museum and the grass in front of it were a place frequented by anarchists and therefore there were enough people to listen to Asimos. His anti-war songs were extremely timely at a time like that when anarchists, in order not to go to the army, tried to get an exemption and it took a long time before they got the first reprieve. Asimos himself, a few months later, also went through a lot until he got his first reprieve, as he describes in his book "Looking for Krockmen". On the grass in front of the Museum

I also saw his daughter for the first time, when she was about two years old. I saw her one more time, in the office of lawyer Katerina Iatropoulos, when she was 28 years old. Asimos, on the grass, had been playing alone with his guitar for some time. I had recorded this "recital" on a tape recorder but it was lost when the police later intervened in my life.

The first anarchist hunger strike in Greece after World War II: The hunger strike of the mutineer sailor Panagiotis Liveretos – The excursion that changed a virgin life: The trip to Alepochori

One afternoon when I was in Exarcheion Square with friends from the "Education Group", we learned that Panagiotis Liveretos went on a hunger strike in prison, where he was after being sued by a lawyer of the shipowners who owned the ship "Aeolian Wind". This lawyer had accused Liveretos of having struck him, in one of the trials of the shipowners against the crew of the ship "Aeolian Wind." The crew was on trial for mutiny in the ship while it was off the coast of Brazil. Panagiotis had played a leading role in this revolt and at his suggestion the mutineers had named the boat "Ulrike Meinhof", before the revolt was suppressed by the Brazilian police. Four people, including one Vana and Sophia, George's friend, then decided to do something about the strike. Indeed, we produced a proclamation and, with loudspeakers borrowed from the International Library, we read it outside the main entrance of the Polytechnic. And of course we distributed too. Until one day Kavantzias appeared with some others and told us that they would do something more organized and more massive than us for Liveretos. They didn't do much. They produced another proclamation similar to ours, in many copies, and distributed it in front of the Polytechnic. After a few days, Liveretos was released from prison and I met him for the last time at the office of lawyer Katerina Iatropoulou.

The discussions of the "Education Group" continued as normal. But the people who gathered did not want to limit themselves only to political work, but also wanted to strengthen the social relations between them. For this purpose, it was decided, those of us who participated in the discussions, to go on an excursion together. Alepochori was chosen as the destination. So, one fine day, we had made an appointment at Thisio, from where we would take the bus to Megara and get off at the turn for Alepochori. Indeed, we took the bus and got off at the bend, from where we started in pairs or groups of three, or even one by one, to hitchhike to the vehicles turning towards Alepochori. In those years, hitchhiking was a common way of travel for those who had no money. I, as one might expect who knows that I am accustomed, out of politeness, to always give priority to others, remained last together with a short and thin girl, Lida. For a long time we were trying to get someone to pick us up but he wouldn't take us. And we didn't want to split up and have the girl travel alone. Finally, after a long time, a van picked us up, in which we

found other hitchhikers. With that we arrived at Alepochori and together with the others, who had been waiting for us for so long. We ended up in the evening at a beach that was deserted and had little light. There we lit a fire and anyone who wanted took a bath with or without a swimsuit. We had also brought some food with us and we ate it. What we didn't manage to have was the water. That's why, late at night, we thought of going to the city for water and I went with a girl, the Vana I mentioned above. On the way we talked a lot and laughed, and I mention this because I really liked walking with a girl, at night, on a secluded beach in Attica. It had never happened to me before. We slept near the fire, on the sand.

The other day I woke up with a bunch of strangers around me, who had laid out their things to take a bath. I also took a bath again and then I sat next to the couple I know, George and Sophia, and we talked. At noon we went and sat in a cafe and took pictures. A rough Greek had come and sat with us and was trying to strike up a conversation with our girls. In the afternoon we decided to go back by hitchhiking again and I along with Vana and another friend returned to Athens in the back of a farm semi-truck. I had a lot of fun and during the ride I told jokes and we laughed. Maybe I've never laughed so long in my entire life. After all these years I can surmise that the reason I was so keen was the nervousness of having never traveled in such uncomfortable conditions before, and with such good company, who laughed at my mocking comments about the conditions of the trip and for what, unusually, we had experienced in Alepochori. When late in the afternoon, before nightfall (it was July 26th and late at night), I got home, put on my brother's cassette player and listened to a Bob Dylan tape that Sophia had given me to listen to. As I was listening, for the first time in my life, to "Blowing in the wind", Sophia called me, she told me that she had returned to Athens with the motorcycle of the rough guy who flirted her all the way, and asked me to make an appointment. We booked the appointment for the next day in front of the Polytechnic. Walking back to my room from the room where the phone was, full of joy about the date, I was listening to "Blowing in the wind", the line "How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?" and I felt that, at last, something was changing in my miserable life and I wasn't wrong. From Alepochori onwards, my contacts with Sophia intensified, until a moment came when she broke up with her boyfriend Giorgos and made up with me, as we will see below.

"Three moons in the square"

That summer, I went down from Chalandri every day in Athens, to Exarcheion Square, and also passed by the steps of the Museum. I kept finding several acquaintances, so that I can have endless conversations. Every night I ate souvlaki from the souvlaki shop that was at the bottom of the square or from another one at

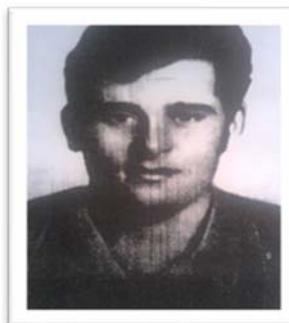
the beginning of Stournari. This was from someone very polite with a provincial (Vlach, as we called it back then) accent. Whenever I ordered souvlaki he asked me: "With fries"? With potatoes and a double pita, the souvlaki cost 12 drachmas, which was not much, considering that at the time the minimum daily wage was 230 drachmas. So, I always got souvlaki with "potatoes". I would sit until late in the square and sometimes spend the whole night there, since there was no bus to Chalandri. They hadn't put in night buses yet. I remember once I had fallen asleep on the chair in Rousso's cafe. Another time I had slept in the basement of the house we were renting for the talks, having the keys. And other times I slept in the house that Savvas had rented with his younger brother and his sister in Nikiforou Uranou. In this house, I found myself one night with Sophia who had also spent time in the square and was not feeling well. I can say that probably since then the romance between us began.

At that time I had definitely fallen in love with her, because I remember that at some point, together with Giorgos Agnos, who I used to hang out with a lot, we had taken the bus to go to some beach, maybe in Vouliagmeni, for a swim. At a certain stop, George and Sophia got on the bus as they were going to another beach. We greeted each other and they got off somewhere else. Well, this chance meeting was enough to spoil my mood and, although we finally did the excursion with George and we slept on the sand at night, the whole day, and because of me and George's day, went wrong. Sophia was stuck in my mind and it wouldn't come off. Without her I had no appetite for anything. I was forced to explain to George what had happened to me, because I was not speaking and this was something unprecedented. It was a terribly torturous feeling that I felt. I was in despair because I missed Sophia!

Fortunately Sophia seemed to live up to my hopes, until she decided to go on holiday to Lefkada with her boyfriend George. We had agreed that when she came back, I would have my own house so that we could be together. While she was away in Lefkada, I managed to find in Asklipiou, in an old two-story building, a room for rent on the raised ground floor, where two other rooms were rented separately. There was a communal kitchen and a communal toilet that was permanently clogged. The rent was six hundred drachmas a month. It must have been the lowest rent that anyone could find and Zygomas might have stayed in a house with such a rent, because in his song "Ballad" he talks about "rooms with only six hundred balls". When Sophia came back from Lefkada we saw each other every day and sometimes ended up in this house. George, her friend, around that time, had gone with a separate group to Crete.

The strange and horrible death of the heroic Panagiotis Liveretos

I had a date with Sophia one afternoon in August, when we read in a newspaper that Panagiotis Liveretos had committed suicide. We found it incomprehensible that such a combative comrade should commit suicide who, for months after the mutiny on board the Aeolian wind, had been at the forefront of the struggle against the company, which had sued the sailors and taken them to court. In fact, he had clashed with the company's lawyer and when he was in prison he went on a hunger strike, which he only stopped when the lawyer withdrew the lawsuit he had filed against him, and he was released. Sophia had met him personally before me, because she had attended the trials against the sailors in Piraeus together with other anarchists. She had seen with her own eyes that Panagiotis was encouraging the other sailors in their conflict with the company. She had also told me that during the May Day events of 1977, Panagiotis was so enthusiastic that he had proposed to put his car in the roadblock. How did Panagiotis suddenly become another person and commit suicide? And even in such a horrible way, like self-immolation, as the newspapers wrote? These questions still remain unanswered, although 40 years have passed since then and I don't think they will ever be answered. We, then, went with other comrades to Panagiotis's house, in case we learned anything from his parents, but we didn't because they didn't know anything. He had been found dead on the roof. We returned from his house in the car of a friend of Sylvia Papadopoulou, upon her invitation. I was impressed by Sylvia's willingness, because the two previous times I had seen her in the "Diethnis" bookstore she was a bit aggressive. The first time she had refused to give me Arsinov's book on the Makhno movement, which was in English and had been imported from abroad, even though I had told her that I had agreed with Konstantinides, and the second time she had scolded me, when I had told her that I appeared on the May Day 1977 anarchist poster, which had a quote from Cardinal Retz underneath. However, Arsinov's book was finally sent to me by Konstantinidis with Costas from Chalandri.



Panagiotis Liveretos at the time I met him

Life Goes On – Anarchists at War with Communists: An Attack on the offices of E.K.K.E.

Sophia must have broken up with her boyfriend George after he returned from Crete. This does not mean, of course, that George made a fuss about it. He felt no sense of ownership over Sophia, and he would be ashamed to, since he was an anarchist. I think he also found another girlfriend then. He continued to come to the discussions in Valtetsiou. In the context of these discussions, I, Sophia and George Agnos, had set up a group that supported the creation of communes as the best form of organization of our milieu and as an alternative way of life for anarchists, in relation to the family. In fact, at some stage, we had also gone to the office of the lawyer of our milieu, Katerina Iatropoulou, to consult her on whether George Agnos could leave his house, without his father being able to bring him back. George must not have turned 18 then. I don't remember what Katerina had told us.

One incident that I remember that made a very bad impression on me at the time was our clash with the ekketzides in front of the Polytechnic on the first anniversary of Mao Zedong's death. The conflict began when our own Michael Protopsaltis, nicknamed "The Rooster" because of the magazine he published under that name, painted mustaches on Mao Zedong's face, which was depicted on a poster they had get stuck in front of the main entrance of the Polytechnic University. The ekketzides had demanded explanations, he had reacted and then started to gather in front of the Polytechnic ekketzides and anarchists ready to fight. We, although we had some rudimentary "weapons" such as clubs and some chain (there was a fellow nicknamed "Baron" who brandished a chain as a weapon), we were very few compared to the ekketzides who also had clubs and poles. That's why, when the assault happened, we retreated running. I remember Sophia in Tositsa street standing with a large pole in her hands that seemed to me to be twice her height. Fortunately the ekketzides had ignored her because she was a woman. I think I told her to come with me, because the pole wouldn't save her if they attacked her. Unfortunately, these incidents extended to Exarcheion square, where the Ekketzides had attacked anarchists of the square who were sitting in the cafes. One of them was Konstantinidis, who I remember with an iron chair in his hands, trying to push them away. When the episodes were over, I remember some of our people saying that only the stool pigeons in our milieu would be happy to see us clash with the ekketzides, who might not have been our comrades but they weren't fascists or cops either. Konstantinidis insisted that there are no stool pigeons in our milieu. And yet, such events continued the next day in a way that would make the stool pigeons rub their hands. Anarchists attacked with Molotov cocktails to burn down the offices of the E.K.K.E. in Valtetsiou. I, however, was not among them.

The night before I had learned some unpleasant things concerning me personally from a companion whom I had hosted at my house, and I had no desire to go down to the square. In fact, I had also left Athens. This story ended with arrests and detentions, as I had heard from Kokkoras (the rooster). I don't remember if there was any trial. What I do remember, however, is that, as I heard many years later from Kokkoras (the rooster), one of the protagonists of the attack on the EKKE offices, perhaps the main one, was never imprisoned and has since disappeared.

We were now in September and the summer, this short summer of my own anarchy, was drawing to a close. I remember that we were still sitting on the grass in front of the Museum and at some point when it was starting to blow and we could see the tall trees shaking from the gusts of wind, I had Sophia in my arms to keep her warm. I wondered how our lives would turn out. Now that our lives are past, I know.

In the attic of the anarchist "troubadour" Christos Zygomas - The "Bulletin" of the dreaming ideologues

One of these evenings we were in the attic rented by Zygomas in Exarchia. Zygomas also had a friend at his house that day. I had gone there with Sophia and had taken my brother's tape recorder with me in order to record him, if he played the guitar and sang. While Zygomas had already composed excellent songs, up to that time, he had not released anything. And indeed Zygomas, that night, on the roof in front of his loft, had played the guitar and sung his songs or poems with music. Even his friend had played something of his own. The tape of that night was saved and on it one can listen to the original form of the song composed by Zygomas for the prison ("Deserted city where dawn comes" etc.). I was lucky enough to experience some of the moments that inspired Zygomas to compose this song. This had happened one night when we had stayed together until the morning in a coffee shop in Patision where he used to spend the nights. We kept talking and talking about the strange phenomenon of not imprisoning anarchists for incidents that took place, such as the May Day of 1977, and imprisoning communists, just as ekketzides had been imprisoned. We came to the hypothesis that the Greek state cannot see the anarchists as a threat, because they do not want another state in place of the existing one, and the non-existence of a state cannot be understood by the minds of the rulers. The rulers saw that the anarchists were fighting for something that would never happen and that is why this fight was not dangerous. Unfortunately, in a short time we would be disproved and the prisons would start to "host" anarchists. As we were returning to Exarchia, walking on Patision street, we saw in the deserted city's shadows on the streets and the traffic starting, while the municipal garbage truck was going in front of us.

The discussions in Valtetsiou were coming to an end. The idea of publishing a magazine with the views discussed had been accepted. Anyone could submit written opinions for publication, but opinions from groups of individuals would also be accepted. This magazine would be widely circulated in our milieu and would be the trigger for a better ideological and organizational formation of our milieu. Before the magazine came out, a split began to appear within the discussion group: On the one hand there were those who wanted the magazine to be called an anarchist bulletin, which constituted the large majority, and on the other hand those who did not want the designation anarchist to precede, because they considered that those who participated with texts had not yet proven that they were anarchists. Among the latter I was the most noisy and obstinate, while among the former the most prominent was Nikos Balis. Finally, in a crucial discussion that took place on the grass of Exarcheion square, next to the chairs of Roussos' cafe, Balis, disgusted by me, declared his resignation from the collective, telling me: "Take them and do what you think." I strongly reacted by saying that if someone was to leave, it was not democratic for the one expressing the majority to leave but the one expressing the minority. And he was me, so I had to leave. My resignation was accepted and the few who agreed with me left with me. Nevertheless, when the majority finally brought out the magazine, they called it Bulletin and not Anarchist Bulletin and in it, after the preface, there is a text by me and by those who left, such as the "Group for Communes", in which we were me, Sophia and George Agnos.

A very nice man: The fighter of the Athens uprising of December 1944 who was exiled to the Egyptian concentration camp in El Daba

All this time that I was seeing Sophia, meeting her in the garden of the National Library, because near was the starting point of the buses for Byron neighborhood where Sophia lived, Sophia occasionally worked day jobs in a toy factory. On the one hand, I didn't like her working and me not working, and on the other hand, I needed money for the house I had rented. So I started looking for a job again with the "Ta Nea" ads. But before I started a new job, or shortly after I started the job I found, Sophia had asked me to go to her house to meet her parents and it would be good if my mother came too, so that they would take me seriously as a man who had serious purposes for their daughter. So, one night, together with my mother, I was at Sophia's house in Byron and met her father and her mother.

I had already met Sophia's brother, who was a year younger than her, in Exarchia, because he also participated in the actions of the anarchists and had already annoyed me greatly by pretending to be the protector of his sister's honor. I don't know if he had done the same with Sophia's previous boyfriend who was a giant. I then and always seemed a mild and harmless person. I made my position clear to Sophia's father from the beginning and said that I was willing for marriage. He, having been surprised at my haste, had told me not to rush but that reason should simply prevail.

Sophia's father was a nice man and had a great sense of humor. The black humour, which is acquired in old age by people who have been through a lot in their lives and yet have survived. Such was my uncle Meltos, such was my editor after many years, Leonidas Christakis. Sophia's mother was very smiling and helpful and did not ask for any explanation from me. After all, my mother who had come with me, I imagine she would have given them some positive information about me. That evening, Sophia's father picked us up and took us to a tavern on a hill in the district, from where he had a nice view of Athens at night. I remember that he suggested that Sophia first finish a school she had started earlier, a private design school, and then we get married. His proposal, although I liked it, was not up to me and was not carried out.

Another time, that summer, I went on a trip with Sophia's family. We had all gone together by coach to Agorani. Agorani must have been famous at that time, because I had gone by coach before in the 60s, as I have written above. From this trip to Agorani we have the only photos from the 70s, me and Sophia together. We took pictures together again about five years later, in 1982.

The marble businessman' son as a marble worker - The Homeric quarrel with my father for a pair of shoes!

Finally, I found a job again from the "Ta Nea" classifieds. It was a job in the marble factory of the company that exploited the Pentelis-Dionysos quarries. I had to get up at 5 in the morning to be at Omonia at 6, from where the company bus left for Dionysos, where their quarries and factory were located. Work started at 7 in the morning. I remember going down to Omonia from another house I had rented at the time, an underground apartment in Kosma Melodou street, diagonal of Asklepiou street. This was a normal apartment, not a room, and one could stay comfortably. Except that I had to give 2500 drachmas a month and for that I had to work. After all, the work at the marble factory was not difficult. If I wasn't loading any trucks with small slabs, which wasn't often, I worked in front of a small marble cutter (machine), which was fed by some kind of belt transport, which continued

even after my own "intervention". And I didn't have a problem with the foremen, because one day the boss came to where we were working, a doctor, who, when he learned my last name, told me that it was a well-known name in the marble world and asked me if I had any relatives in the marble business. I told him about my father and my uncle Melto and he knew Melto because my uncle used to buy marbles from there. Learning of my relationship with his acquaintance, the boss ordered the foremen to watch me and not make me do heavy work. But, in general, there was a good treatment of the staff. All the miners and us factory workers had been given nice green military style jackets, as was the fashion at the time, as well as blue jeans. Also, every morning when we arrived at the quarry, we went to the canteen and were given a bottle of milk. And we were paid normally every Saturday. So having money, I told Sophia and she stopped going to the toy factory where she worked.

But the money was not enough for much. So, when one day I saw that Sophia's boots were damaged, I decided to ask my father for 10,000 drachmas, to buy her boots and to have something on the side. My father asked me to promise him that they would not go for proclamations, brochures, etc. I considered this a declaration of loyalty and refused. He didn't give it to me and I had a serious fight with him.

Sophia and I saw each other every day. Now she was coming to Kosma Melodou's house. Only once did she not come to our meeting at the departure point of the buses to Metamorfosi (Byron), because it was pouring down heavy rain and the transports had stopped. Then I walked from the center of Athens to her house where I spent the night, and in the morning I went to work late. That night her parents realized how much I loved her. I remember her father being happy with me and telling me anecdotes from his struggles in the resistance against the Germans and their collaborators during the German occupation of Greece.

A day that shook Europe: The murder of the three leading members of the Red Army Faction - What did the anarchists do when the demonstration of the 17th November 1977 for the anniversary of the Polytechnic massacre was banned

On the 18th of October that year, three city rebels were found dead in their cells, in Stammheim Prison in Stuttgart, Germany: Baander, Eslin and Raspe. Earlier there had been a battle at Mogadishu airport, where hijackers had been killed, who had hijacked a plane and were demanding the release of the rebels who were later found killed in prisons, as well as other rebels. The official version for those killed in Stammheim prisons was suicide. But we all thought they had been killed. In Athens and in other European capitals there had been protests and incidents the other day.

Konstantinidis, Takhtsidis, Mathioudakis, Stavroula Lagadinou and another girl were caught for participating in the Athens' riots. At the court, Konstantinidis was sentenced to three and a half years in prison, Mathioudakis two and Stavroula one and a half, I think. Also, some Greek city guerillas tried to put a bomb in a factory of the German company AEG but the police caught up with them and there was a fight with a dead rebel, Christos Kasimis. In the following days, Nikolas Asimos, Nikos Balis, Giannis Felekis, Kyriakos Vassiliadis, editor of the anarchist newspaper "Here and Now" which published only one issue, Michalis Protopsaltis and other leaders of subversive newspapers or magazines, were arrested and imprisoned as instigators of the riots after the death of the German insurgents in the prisons. Me and some other kids had then made a proclamation. It also happened that on the day of Kasimi's funeral, which took place at the Chalandri's cemetery, I didn't go to work because I was on sick leave for three days, and as I was feeling better, I went to the funeral. At the cemetery I had the bright idea to write on the front wall with black spray paint "VIOLENCE TO THE VIOLENCE OF POWER" and something similar on the side. I hadn't noticed that they were recording us with cameras across the street. When a few days after Kasimi's funeral, the police caught Giannis Serifis, an AEG worker, they announced that they had suspected him because they had recorded his wife crying over Kasimi's grave.

That year the celebration of the anniversary of the Polytechnic massacre (November 17) was again postponed due to elections, just like in 1974. And these elections were won, as then, by the New Democracy. We gathered that day but we did not manage to do what was done in 1974 with the march to the Kaisariani Shooting Range. There was no march to the American embassy either. There were some Molotov cocktails and they were discussing what to do with them. The other day we read that some Molotov cocktails had been thrown at the French Institute in Athens. At the official celebration that followed several days later, I, coming down from Chalandri, had not reached the anarchists' block in time, or I did not go purposely because I did not like the outdated celebration. I do not remember. There had been incidents between anarchists and pasoktzides (followers of Panhellenic Socialist Movement), and the pasoktzides had caught Sophia's brother and handed him over to the police. He was held for a few hours but was released. I, seeing Sophia worried about her brother who appeared as quite a militant anarchist after he had been caught (we had also gone to Iatropoulou's office asking her to call the Security Police), I started to feel a little bad that I was not so militant.

MARRIAGE AND PRISON

The end of my own dream of Anarchy: The end of the "Group for the Communes" - An unwanted but inevitable marriage into a "close family circle" without the groom's father and with borrowed wedding rings

The work I did kept me at a distance from what was happening in the anarchist milieu. Even George the Agnos, whom I always called George the Little, I no longer saw. He one day, having seen that my political collaboration with Sophia in the framework of the "Community Group" had ended in a romance, had complained to me that we started as three and ended up as two, me and Sophia, or something similar. Nor had the discussions on education led to the publication of a brochure. If something came out, some announcement would come out. But I'm not sure about that. The only person I saw everyday was Sophia. But I didn't want us to live apart. And since she had told me that we would stay together only through marriage, I decided to get married. Back then there was no civil marriage and even though we didn't believe in any god, we had to have a religious marriage. So, after we did the necessary medical tests and collected the necessary papers, we made an appointment on a Tuesday morning with the priest of the responsible, according to the law, parish, called the closest relatives and went to get married. I, in order to endure the ceremony, had also taken two tranquilizers, while, to show my opposition to coercion, I had gone in very worn blue jeans. Sophia was wearing a dress that her aunt bought for her. For my wedding ring I used Sophia's mother's wedding ring and Sophia used my mother's wedding ring for hers. Sophia's parents, her brother, my mother and my brother who also acted as best man were present. I hadn't called my father, because I had a fight with him. But I don't think this bothered him too much, because I knew he didn't look favorably on my marriage with Sophia. He always dreamed of marrying a woman of some financial standing. In ten to fifteen minutes we were done and left. The church was Peter and Paul, in Imitos, and the date was December 27, 1977.

After the wedding I never went back to work. It was too much for me to have Sophia at home and me away half the day. After all, I had some money on the side and I assumed that we could live with it until I found another job again. But before looking for a job, I thought of taking a trip to England, as was my original plan before I got married. In those days we had also found a friend who was studying at the University of Manchester and he had told us that if we went to England, we should go find him and he would do something for us there. I have to make it clear that I hadn't even rented out Asklipiou's room, so in order not to run out of money quickly, I rented out Kosma Melodou's basement apartment. After all, I had only a few things to Kosma Melodou and I didn't have to pay for moving. Also, at that time, my friend Savvas had met someone, a Canadian, Paul, who traveled the world

with little money and therefore lived in some ruin in Athens. So, since we were going to be away in England, we told Paul to stay, while we were away, in the room I was renting.

Towards freedom: My first "escape" from the prison called Greece

The trip to England would be the first trip abroad of our lives, so we wanted to save up so we could stay as long as we could. On the other hand, it would not be just a pleasure trip. I intended to buy from England books related to anarchy and the social movements of the 60s and 70s, to translate and publish them in Greece, where, until then, few books about these movements had been issued. So, to save money, we decided to go by coach of the company "Magic Bus" or Stafford (something like that) which was the cheapest way to travel abroad. And in London where we would go, we would stay in a youth hostel in order to pay cheaply. We had even brought food with us from Greece, so that we wouldn't have to waste money abroad. After all, the money we could take with us for the trip was limited. If I remember correctly the limit for each trip abroad was 230 or 250 dollars. What I didn't think to take with me was a camera. If I had, the photos we would have taken would have been the most beautiful of our lives. Because in 1978 London still retained many of the characteristics that made it stand out from other European capitals and we were young and beautiful then: Sophia was 18 years old and I was 21.

But I thought of taking a can of olives for the trip! This resulted in a bus stop, in what was then Yugoslavia, as I was getting off the bus and a fellow passenger was getting on, I accidentally spilled oil from the can of olives on his black leather overcoat. Fortunately he was not a thug, as many Greeks are, because he was also Greek, and he did not curse me. But because he was traveling with a beautiful blonde, he complained that the girl would smell oil all the way. Another idea my brother had put to me before we left was to get two drachmas' coins, because when he had gone in London, in 1974, to a conference of the International Committee of the 4th International, he had seen machines where you put in coins and they dispense chocolates. And the English coins had the diameter and thickness of the Greek two drachmas' coin but much greater value. So I had taken with me, after a visit to the Bank of Greece, around 200 such coins. Unfortunately, as I got them, I brought them back, because the English coins that the machines took were heavier, so the machines were not fooled when I was putting a two drachmas' coin in them. We had also taken with us, in case we run out of money, a gold British pound that my mother had given us.

So, equipped, we boarded the coach that would take us to London on January 17, 1978. This trip, our first trip, would define the rest of our lives. I couldn't imagine that then. Therefore, while the journey lasted, I was thinking about the present and not the future. And the present impressed me. The first time I was impressed was when we crossed the border with the then Yugoslavia and left Greece. On the one hand, I felt that I had been freed from the authority of the omnipotent and often provocative Greek police, and on the other hand, I could hear a language other than Greek being spoken in the Duty Free store. I saw a big world opening up in front of me and Greece behind me seemed like a prison, from which I had come out. The duty free foreign cigarettes we bought at the duty free shop were much better than the Greek ones we were smoking and added their touch to the magic of the moment. And how could I not feel that way, when earlier we had stopped for an hour at the Greek border until the police checked us, to see if they would allow us to leave Greece-prison? They even stamped our passports to show when we left Greece.

To get to London, we had to cross what was then Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland and France and take a ferry from there. Yugoslavia back then was a big country and it took a day and a night's travel to cross it. Now it has been cut into pieces so that, in order to cross it, one has to stop every now and then at borders that did not exist at the time. The first border we had found in front of us after the Greek-Yugoslav was the Italo-Yugoslav of Villa Opicina. By the time we got there we had seen cities and villages with buildings different from the Greek ones which are all white, and much more beautiful than the Greek ones which are all square. Also, we saw very much green. We had traveled through endless forests. You couldn't see landscape bare from woods like that of southern Greece there... And a lot of snow, because it was the month of January. Another world more beautiful (at least externally) than Greece. At the stops in Yugoslavia we had bought very cheap cigarettes, "Drina" and "Morava", which were aromatic compared to the Greek ones, giving Yugoslav Dinars. The only thing that had made a bad impression on us was that in the toilets we found, when the bus made stops, we had to pay to enter, something unprecedented for Greek standards, because all public toilets were free, at that time, in Greece. However, when we left Yugoslavia behind and reached the Italian border, I felt that I would miss this country. Maybe because it was the first country I ever set foot in, leaving Greece.

We crossed Italy at night and I was sleeping. Before I fell asleep, I realized from the buildings, shops and streets of the border that it was richer than both Greece and Yugoslavia. When we got to the Italian-Swiss border and I woke up, Sophia told me she hadn't slept and was looking all the way through the window. She had seen that Italy was a beautiful country and had expressed a desire to live there.

The life much later brought us there and Italy was for Sophia the only country where she spent some years outside of Greece. In hindsight I feel that I did something to make her wish come true. Otherwise, the other countries we crossed until we got to Calais and took the ferry were no different, at least in terms of their national roads, from Italy. We had crossed the outskirts of Paris at night and that's why we didn't see anything of Paris. When we arrived in Calais, we had already been on the road for about 48 hours and the fatigue overpowered our observation. I only remember that the ferry ride was around three hours and it was daytime. That is, from the windows of the ship we could see the sea. It was daylight when we landed in Dover and went through control. The policeman, the person in charge of immigration, asked us to see our money and asked us why we were going to England and if there was someone to vouch for us. Also, when he saw that our passports had a different last name, he asked us if Sophia's parents knew about her trip and if we planned to get married in England. I told him we were married but I don't remember showing him any proof. Anyway, he stamped our passports and let us through.

And I have special memories from the Dover-London route. Not because I was seeing for the first time a country that I had heard about since childhood, had dreamed about, learned its language and was the destination of my journey, but because the English countryside resembles a lawned park dotted with picturesque villages with pretty two-story houses, like doll's houses. On the other hand, we had also changed buses and the bus driven by an Englishman and not a Greek, went on the left side of the road and not on the right, as it went in Greece and the rest of Europe we had crossed. And the Dover- London route was not short either, with the result that we arrived in London at night, if I'm not mistaken, at Hanover Square. A guy from Greece got off the bus with us and asked if we had booked a hotel. When I told him we would be staying in a hostel, he told us that the first time he traveled to London, he spent the first night in a phone booth! We took a taxi and went to the hostel which was near the Gloucester Street tube station. Then I could not imagine that I would happen to be staying in London near the same stop again after 32 years! After 32 years even the beautiful Rolls-Royce-like taxis of London had been replaced by smaller ones. One such, royal I would say, taxi took us to the hostel. For the first time I was getting into such a tall car, and in fact separated by an unbreakable glass into two parts, so that you could not communicate with the driver except through a microphone, because you could only sit in the back. What I didn't expect, however, was when we got off and paid, the driver was not satisfied with the money we gave him but asked us for something I didn't know what it was, the tip. At length, he explained to me that London drivers were accustomed to tipping as well. The tip was the gratuity. The hostel, of course, was strikingly beautiful from the outside, like all the buildings in the historic center of London. And the bed that was rented by

each of us quite cheap: Two pounds. It was managed by some Indians. One of them led us to separate rooms: Separate room with beds for women and separate room with beds for men. This, admittedly, I did not expect, because it had never happened to me before and I had not even wondered why hostels are cheaper than hotels. Anyway, I broke up with Sophia and went into a dark room. When I turned on the light to find my bed, I saw other people in the beds and in fact, a blonde, protested because I turned on the light. I closed it and went to sleep. I was dead tired but I was in London!

A beautiful world capital: London

The other day, for the first time in our lives, we had breakfast in a hotel for free, because it was included in the price, and it was quite filling. With this breakfast we could go around the whole day without feeling hungry. At most, we would get some chocolate from a machine. In the evening we usually ate the typical "fish and chips" that we bought from Chinese shops. With such a modest diet we walked around London. Walking is a joy in central London because the city is flat, the pavements wide and without cars or motorbikes parked on them, and all the buildings are beautiful because they were built in the past by wealthy owners who thought it a big deal to own property in central London, apart from the fact that many buildings are public. Although many of these buildings were damaged by World War II bombing, they were repaired or rebuilt as they were before the bombing. There are also many parks, such as Hyde Park which was relatively close to us and for that reason we often crossed it. With so much beauty that I saw around me, I felt that it was worth living in this beautiful city and I dreamed of finding a way to spend my life there. Unfortunately, because I did not have only this goal in life, I did not succeed. So much beauty and yet we had seen almost nothing yet, i.e. neither the sights nor even the river, the Thames. Because if it is a pleasure to walk the streets of central London, it is even more to walk alongside the river. For us, until then, something that is commonplace for European capitals, such as the existence of a river running through them, was something completely unknown. Unfortunately, Athens, where we grew up, is not only not crossed by a river, but is also the ugliest capital in Europe, as the famous journalist and friend of Alekos Panagoulis, Oriana Falatsi, has stated. The historic center of Athens was sacrificed in the first decades after the war, to house the businesses and people who had been displaced from all over Greece by the civil war. In order to house so many shops and so many people, it was necessary to tear down the small beautiful buildings and build in their place uniform five-story apartment buildings. Few buildings in Athens escaped the "modernization" of the city. Instead, London instead of rising high, something which, apart from Athens,

also happened in New York, spread outwards. When we visited it was the largest city in the world.

I don't remember how many and which attractions we visited the first time we went to London. We went back two more times in our lifetime and from the other times I remember what we visited and I don't want to confuse the other visits with the first. After all, in London we were interested in buying books for publication in Greece and getting to know the English anarchists and not in visiting the sights. So we went and found the offices of the fortnightly anarchist newspaper Freedom, which Kropotkin and others had founded in the previous century, and told the comrades there that we were anarchists from Greece. At that time I believed in the camaraderie of anyone who accepted the label anarchist. I had yet to experience how far the image one projects of oneself is from reality. We got a few things from the offices of Freedom, but we learned about other bookstores that either had a large collection and there I could find things that interested me, or they belonged to our movement and there I could find things that I wouldn't find elsewhere. So we visited the political bookstore 'Rising Free', on the outskirts of London, and 'Compendium', a large commercial bookstore. The group that managed "Rising Free" had then started to publish an anarcho-feminist magazine that looked like a newspaper and its dimensions and style were later used by Leonidas Christakis in his own magazine "Ideodromio". I don't know if he got the idea from Zero, that anarcho-feminist magazine, but I haven't seen a magazine in the same format since. The books that I was looking for and found, finally, had to do with movements of the 60s that were unknown at the time in Greece, such as the movement for the communes, the anti-psychiatry movement, the anarcho-feminist, the Vietnam movement, the anarchist movement in art, the anarcho-individualist, etc. I was also looking for a well-known book that was not in open circulation: The Anarchist Cookbook. Also, at some point when it was raining a lot and Sophia's boots were getting watery, we had to get boots for Sophia, even though we wanted to save as much as possible. If we didn't walk much, we wouldn't care about the rain, but walking? We did a lot of it. We even walked at night, when London in winter in those years was quite dark. Even the public lights were not white, as in Greece at that time, but yellow. On one such walk, by the river, one night we had met one guy who asked us something and we replied that we didn't know, because we weren't from England. After asking us and learning that we were from Greece, he told us that he was not English either, because he was from Scotland. We were impressed by this, because when we said England, we always had in mind the whole of Great Britain. Also, one night some twenty noisy young people passed by us who, I think they also had a dog with them. As it was dark by the river and we knew there was a fascist party in England, the "National Front", we were scared. Fortunately, they didn't do anything to us, because even if

they were fascists, they wouldn't be able to imagine that we were not English either, because Sophia is very white with blond hair.

Squatting in the city where the so-called industrial revolution began

Although in the hostel where we were staying, we were no longer staying with others but in a room with two beds in the basement of the hotel, we decided to leave and go find the comrade we had talked to in Greece. We would find him in Manchester. So one afternoon we took the train and in the afternoon, as the sun was setting, we found ourselves in Manchester, the city where, they say, the so-called industrial revolution began. We went straight to the University of Manchester, where the mate had told us we would find him. All we found was the mailbox provided by the university, where we dropped him a note asking for an appointment. We expected that we would find him and he would arrange a place for us to stay, so when we didn't find him, and not having much money to go to a hotel, we "had our fun". Unfortunately, he had not given us his phone number so that we could find him. To Sophia's criticisms of why we came to find our comrade, since we were not sure we would find him, and to her question about what we were going to do now, I remember that I had replied that, if necessary, we would sleep on a bench. I heard such a roasting when I told her this, that I still remember it. Luckily, we found some political magazines in a newsstand and thought we'd turn to them to see if we could find a clue. I don't remember how, but we ended up in a self-managed library, where a fellow served us, i.e. he told us some squat to go and stay. On the occasion, I had also asked him to see the book "Bamn", with proclamations of the illegal movements, which had been sold out and I could not find it even in the largest bookstores in London. He not only found it in the library but also gave it to me. He was a very good man. And, with the information he gave us, we found an occupation, namely a traditional three-story building near a church. There we were welcomed by vegetarians and they made us eat some soup. Then we went up to the first floor, to a room occupied by a Spaniard and an English woman, and sat with them for a while, before going to bed on the second floor. What had struck me about this building was a room, where no one lived, which was full of things. I had not seen anything like this in Greece until then. Namely so many things abandoned. Such abundance had not yet arrived in Greece. From this room I had taken some pocket books to burn in the fireplace of the room where we were to sleep, because it was very cold and for heating we only had an oil lamp that the Spaniard had brought us, telling us that it would snow at night. It would snow and we had broken windows! Fortunately, they found us a sleeping bag, where we slept together I and Sophia wearing even our coats.

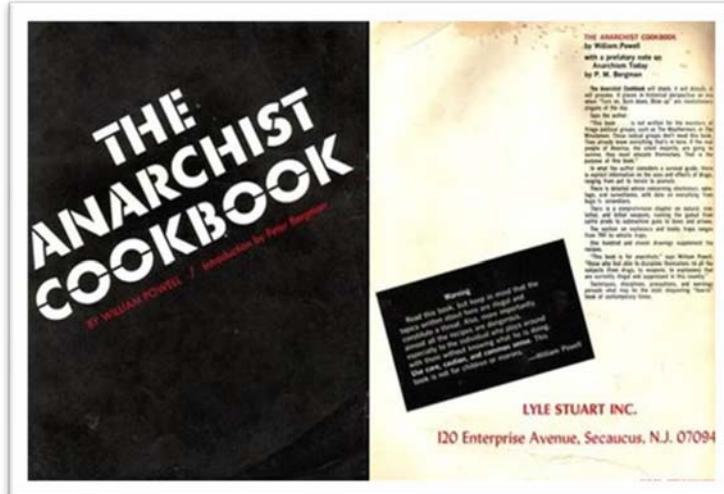
And indeed that night it snowed and we woke up in a snowy Manchester. Snow is nice, if you have the right clothes and shoes. I had the jacket they had given me in the quarry as an overcoat, but for shoes I had some boots, one of which I found was getting water. To keep my foot from freezing, I remember wrapping it in a blue plastic bag.

The comrade came to the appointment we had arranged with him at the university, with the note we had left for him, and thus the period of insecurity ended. We went with him to Bradford, where we stayed at a friend's house, and together we went to Leeds, where there was a showing of a French film for the students. After the film we went to a meeting of Greek students who were politically active on campus. From what I understood, our (me and Sophia's) political "identity" was much more easily accepted in that environment than in the student environment of the same era in Greece. Perhaps because in the English labor movement, Marxist and Leninist ideas never had such prestige as they had in Greece.

**Back to London – A book that cost us dearly when we brought it to Greece:
"The Anarchist Cookbook"**

When we got back to London, in order to avoid paying for our accommodation again, I phoned our comrads' bookstore "Rising Free" to see if they could accommodate us. They agreed to host us, so we took a tube and a bus to a distant suburb of London. We arrived outside the bookstore and knocked and rang the bell and no one opened the door for us. We also found a phone booth nearby and called them, but they still didn't pick up the phone. So we were forced to turn back. But by the time we got to the subway station by bus, the station was closed because it was late at night. There was also no bus back to the hostel we stayed at before we left London so we had to take a taxi to the hostel. We arrived after one in the morning and the outer door was closed, while no one came down to open it for us, no matter how much we rang the bell. Not knowing what to do, we sat on the steps in front of the entrance, until some Algerians appeared and let us in. But since no one from the hotel staff was still coming to serve us, the Algerians offered to host us in their own room. Only because their own room was small, we had to sleep under the table in the room. In the morning we left early, so that the hotel staff would not see us and pay for the night, and then we came back and asked for beds. This time they found us a room with a double bed in the attic of the hotel and we had a very nice view. I mean, we were paying for beds and we had our own room! Too bad our money was running out and we had to go back to Greece.

Before we left, we passed by "Freedom", where we asked to get books that we would pay for them from Greece. We didn't make it because one of the staff, wearing a cardigan with the word "Anarchy" on its back, was adamant. I didn't like the use of anarchy as a cardigan decoration. We may not have gotten as many books from Freedom as we wanted, but we did manage to find the "Anarchist Cookbook" we were looking for, in a bookstore where we went by introductions. Our partners had referred us to a certain employee. Why were we so anxious to find it? What did we want it for? But then we didn't know where it would lead us...



The cover of "The Anarchist Cookbook" that we brought back from London on our first trip abroad.

Back to Greece – We borrow "Anarchist Cookbook" undermining this way our life as a young people

When we returned to Greece, we found one day in Patision street, in front of the Polytechnic, our acquaintance Maharaji and we told him that we were in England and that we had recently returned bringing many books with us. Among these we had told him that we had brought "Anarchist Cookbook" which had everything you could think of, from drug information to bomb making instructions. Then Maharaji asked us to lend it to him for a few days so he could have a look. We lent it to him but never saw "Anarchist Cookbook" again. But that's the least of it. What happened because of it cannot be described. Or rather it is described, as we will see below.

What we were interested in at that time was to open a bookstore and after to publish in Greek the books we had brought with us. I had already translated

a pamphlet called "Anarchism, the feminist connection" by Peggy Korniger. In fact, I had given my translation to correct it to a former high school classmate of my brother who had become an English teacher. What we basically lacked was money. But finally, we found money. I don't remember exactly how it happened. I must have told my mother to ask my father for 50,000 drachmas to open the bookstore but my father refused. This matter had become known to my uncle Meltos and he promised to mediate. Indeed, he interceded and managed to convince my father to give the money. We had this money at Asklipiou street's house and, although we were in great need of money to survive, we had spent very little of it until we went to Thessaloniki.

In Thessaloniki copying the "International Werewolf Conspiracy" : The "International Conspiracy of Gravediggers"

What were we doing in Thessaloniki? No, tourism, of course. After all, I had gone two years before, when Savvas had managed to transfer from Panteio to the Faculty of Law in Thessaloniki. I had gone with his brother Michalis and then I had visited some sights. What we were looking for was to hand out leaflets. We had formed a group with a friend, who was studying in Thessaloniki, and we had put out a four-page leaflet aimed at criticizing the conservatism of the students. This proclamation was signed: "International Conspiracy of the Gravediggers." We had taken the idea of the students' criticism from the so-called "Strasbourg Brochure" of the Internationale Situationiste. The idea of the signature we had got by an American anarchist group, the International Werewolf Conspiracy (or Up Against the Wall Motherfucker), as well as the burning skeleton, which we had on its front page in red. My comrades and I had the idea of provoking some kind of movement in the universities, as the situationists had done. And we thought it right to start from Thessaloniki, so that there would be a precedent, when we would share it in Athens. A precedent that would show we were networked and not novices. So, we printed 2,000 copies of this leaflet in an underground printing house, on Manis Street in Exarchia, and took them with us to Thessaloniki, where we went by train.

In Thessaloniki, as we had calculated, we stayed in the apartment that our partner was renting with one or two others, I don't remember exactly. And we ate in the student club, where the control of whether or not were students the ones eating there had weakened by that time. And leaflets, on the first day, we normally distributed outside the university. We must have given about five hundred. What had impressed me was that, when I was handing out the leaflets, a man in his thirties who didn't look like a student approached me, and he said to me more or less: "What do you want the leaflets for, my friend... You seem like a good boy and from what I see you also have a nice girlfriend. You should take care of your life.

What will you gain by what you do"? I, of course, was adamant. And at night, near the apartment building where we lived, a police car was driving around. We didn't pay attention to it.



The skeleton that loomed behind the letters on the front page of our announcement.

A completely unexpected arrest that sealed the life of a "newly married" couple definitively and indelibly

The next day, around noon, and before we had even left the apartment, there was a knock on the door. When we opened we saw many people who told us they were police, and they wanted Philip Kyritsis and Sophia Kyritsis as well as the person who hosted them. As soon as we told them who we were they asked us to follow them. They put us in cars of the security police, our comrade in another car, and they took us to the Security Police Headquarters, without telling us the reason. Thus began the greatest adventure of our lives that would take years to end.

We didn't see the comrade at all at the police station. After they asked us to take out what we had in our pocket, and they found me a big knife, they left us waiting for hours in an office, without telling us the reason. Much later some people came and took a statement from me about the knife. I told them I wanted it to peel

apples and that I was not caught with it on the street but inside the house. After I was arrested and signed my statement, I never heard about the knife that had already been confiscated. Late at night they took us down to the basement and put us in two cells, separately. Sophia's was near toilets and smelled bad. Of course, in such uncertainty and in such an unprecedented situation, it was impossible to sleep. I doubt we slept for an hour. In the morning they came and took us, they put only us, me and Sophia, in a Black Maria, together with two policemen who were guarding us, and we started for Athens, as they told us. It was the 25th of March 1978. I later learned that 34 years ago on the 25th of March 1944, they put all the Jews of Ioannina and some Chams in trucks, took them to the nearest train station and sent them to the extermination camps of Nazi Germany.

The Black Maria that brought us from Thessaloniki to Athens, every now and then had a flat tire and the driver's companion would stop passing cars looking for a pump to inflate it. It was going pretty slow too. So when we arrived in Athens, it was night. They took us to the General Security building on Mesogeion Avenue. It made a great impression on me that when we got down from the Black Maria, the place was lit up by searchlights and in various corners there were armed policemen pointing at us with automatic weapons. I never imagined we were such a danger to the state. And we didn't even know why. At the Security Police Headquarters, they took us to separate cells, without even telling us why we were caught. Only one cop in the elevator that took us up to the detention floor, probably the 5th, he told me that we wanted to burn them alive. I asked him why he was saying that but he didn't answer me. My cell was small and dark with a concrete bed and probably a thin mattress and a couple of gray military woolen blankets. I say probably, because I can't remember such details after all these years. But, at least, it had a door and not bars, like in the detention center in Thessaloniki. It didn't have a toilet, so you had to have a policeman open it for you to go to some shared toilets. He was already accompanying you and waiting for you to go out so he could take you back again. Also, day and night, I heard a loud noise, as if some press were in operation. It is rumored that the noise covered the voices of the prisoners being tortured until they confessed what the cops wanted.

**The interrogations in the Security Police Headquarters - Nikolas Asimos
supports us when we are brought before the judicial investigator - The end of
the "short summer of anarchy" of my life**

It must have been the next day when I was called in for questioning, and then I found out why we had been caught. They accused us of giving eight Molotov cocktails at a certain Papadopoulos. I had told them that I didn't know any Papadopoulos but they insisted that I knew him, because he had testified that he

knew me and that we had given him the Molotov cocktails. I also insisted and that's why they brought us to a cross-examination. Then I realized that Papadopoulos was the Maharaji, to whom I had lent "Anarchist Cooking". So I testified that I knew him but I had not given any Molotov cocktails to him. It was not easy for them to get words from me and I had a fear that they would torture me. But they didn't give me a single slap. Of course they asked me a bunch of other questions, like who I hang out with, if I know any people in the area, and if I know about any bombings of Turkish diplomats' cars. I didn't know anything and replied that I only hung out with my uncle Miltiades (Meltos). I later learned that Sophia, in cross-examination with Maharaji, admitted that we had gone to him with the Molotov cocktails. When at the first opportunity I asked her why she did it, she told me that she did it to shut Papadopoulos' mouth and prevent him from saying any more incriminating things. Anyway, they kept us hidden from the public for five days before they allowed us to see our parents for the first time. I later learned that before they caught us, they had caught a lot of people raiding their homes in Exarchia, trying to find something to portray the anarchists as terrorists. They had even caught Konstantinidis and had him in Security, when they had us. In the end, we seemed to be the best case for them to build on us the scenario of anarchist terrorists who would burn Athens! And the scenario had to be set up, to justify the usefulness of a new law, the anti-terrorist law 774/1978, which the Minister of Justice had submitted to the Parliament for a vote on the very day of our arrest, the 24th March 1978. Unable to get the real urban guerilla organizations, such as the November 17 Revolutionary Organization and the Revolutionary People's Struggle, in order for the public to see terrorist faces in the newspapers, they looked for such faces in the anarchist milieu they had already defamed. They found us the ideal ones. I was photographed wearing the black round glasses and Maharaji was also photographed with the tufted hair and beard. Of course, to tie the script together, they also added photos from magazines that gave instructions for making Molotov cocktails and other means, for popular use against the repressive forces. And almost everyone, who had been caught in Exarchia as suspects, was called to the court as prosecution witnesses against us, regardless of though they had not said anything about us in the preliminary investigation statements. Even my father! The cops, of course, did not imagine that their work was used to set up a scenario. Therefore, they believed that we will not be detained. And in order to avoid all responsibility for the suffering to which they had unjustly subjected us, they had asked me to write to them on a paper how they had treated me, so that I should not say that they had tortured me when I was set free. I wrote the paper, stating that the policemen's behavior seemed cordial. But the investigating judge did not let us go free! When they had taken us to him, in a building in the center of Athens, in the corridors of the offices, our supporters had come, among them Nikolas Asimos. He had just

passed then an adventure in the army trying to avoid conscription, and had his hand wrapped in bandages. He had his little girl with him who was holding a toy machine gun. This, at one point, he used outside the coroner's office, and reporters and other bystanders were momentarily startled by the noise of the machine gun. The other day in some newspaper they wrote "The terrorists support the terrorists" and they had a picture of Asimos! Asimos responded to this challenge with his song "We are terrorists... all of us, all of us with Manolis first", which, as he wrote in his book "Looking for Krocanthropos" this song was his answer for ours (me and Sophia's) unfair treatment.



Nikolas Asimos on the left and our co-accused Papadopoulos between the two plainclothes cops as they bring us to the interrogator

The interrogator asked me what they had asked me at the Security, only now a lawyer was also present, the resistance fighter Takis Papas, who later became the president of the Athens Bar Association. I answered him as I answered the Security, e.g. that the seven bottles of cleaning gasoline they had found in our house in Asklepiou, we had them for cleaning, as well as some lints. And as for the oil canister they had found, I told him we would use it for heating, bringing home an oil stove. Although the case was ridiculous since they were basing the charge of terrorism on molotov cocktails, the newspapers were on the trick and went wild on us! The "Ta Nea" (The News), on the first page, had our faces and above in big letters: "BOMBERS". In short, the scenario was a journalistic feat that not even the General Security officers could have predicted. And for the needs of presenting us as dangerous terrorists, they kept us for 12 days in the Security for no real reason. There, at some point I heard a commotion from the corridor and realized that it was a foreign girl, a prisoner, who was fighting with the cops and telling them that they wanted to rape her and that's why they had arrested her. In general, I heard voices from the corridors but I did not understand what was happening.

The little window in the iron door of my cell was very small and I could hardly see anything from the outside. And because my cell was lit by a night lamp, I couldn't even read the case file they had brought me before they took us to the investigator. It goes without saying that inside the cell I was without a belt and without laces, supposedly to avoid the possibility of suicide. Knowing that they always remove belts and cords before putting a prisoner in the cell, I am outraged when dead prisoners are taken out of Security cells or police stations and the cops announce that they have killed themselves with their shoelaces or belts. After 12 days in such conditions, they put us in a Black Maria and took us to Korydallos prisons. I would see Sophia again in court, after many months. Our romance had only lasted one summer and one winter!

The theater continues: Unwanted in Korydallos prison!

I arrived at Korydallos prison at noon, when the cells were closed. After taking fingerprints from both my hands and a normal search, i.e. with touching and not stripping and anal check that they do now, I was taken to the warehouse, from where they gave me a mattress, two sheets, two military blankets, a pillow, a pillow case, a white plastic caravana (a pot with a long handle) and a white plastic spoon. From the warehouse I was taken to an empty cell in the fourth wing. The cell was on the upper floors and had a bed, a table and a chair. It also had a Turkish toilet to the left of the door as we entered. Nice cell, compared to the General Security cell. Unfortunately, I would not stay there long, because in the afternoon, after a certain Karzis (if I remember the name well) came to greet me, known from the newspapers as the kidnapper of the little Lebanese, who directed me to the most necessary issues and I think brought me some necessary ones, such as soap and toilet paper, the guards took me from this wing, the fourth, and took me to the third wing, where no one greeted me. And there they put me in a cell by myself, but they wouldn't leave me in that cell for a long time either. I remember, when I first went out into the courtyard of the third wing, a young Arab who spoke English approached me and told me that he had been in Greece for a couple of days and had found himself in prison without realizing it, because he had on him a knife. He was asking me how long he would stay inside. Of course I had no idea but I had tried to give him courage. Another thing I remember from this, my first few-day stay in Korydallos, was a prisoner who, while we were being locked in the cells, came and asked me for a book to read. I showed him some books I had with me but he didn't take any, because when he spoke of a book he meant a magazine!

Not a few days passed from the day I was transferred to Korydallos and they took me from there to send me, even though I was under trial, to the heavy

"Criminals' Prisons of Aegina", where they used to send death row inmates and now lifers and others with heavy sentences. The theater played against us continued without anyone from the political world protesting. In fact, Maharaji, who was a very mild-mannered and quiet person than me, was sent to the Disciplinary Prisons of Corfu. From there he tried to send a telegram to his folks saying 'Death here' but it was cut off by the prison service, from what I've heard. In the transfer from the Department of Transfers of Piraeus to the prison of Aegina there were four of us, tied in pairs. I was attached to a handsome and kind young man, Miltiades, who was accused of killing a shipowner who was buying boys. The other two, according to their words, were in, one for gambling and the other for a divorce that he did not pay his ex-wife. They took us on the ferry of the line and for the duration of the journey, about an hour and a half, we were not taken out of the Black Maria.

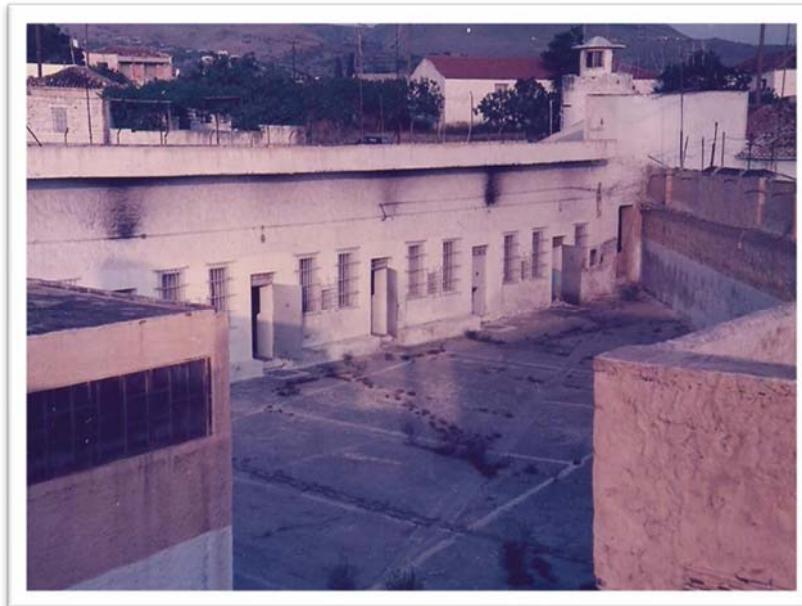
In the prison of the century before the previous that no longer exists

In the prison of Aegina, which impressed me because of its antiquity (it was built as an orphanage in 1828 by Ioannis Kapodistrias), after a check similar to that of Korydallos and after giving me the usual things, I was sent to the second wing, to ward 7.



The entrance to the prisons of Aegina, when I visited them after they were closed. On the left me and on the right a friend of Theodoros Tsouvalakis

All the wards in the wing faced a concrete courtyard, which at one end had Turkish toilets. It also had a kitchenette. Each ward also had a Turkish toilet and a wood stove. I don't remember if the second wing wards had a sink, as did the fourth ray wings, where I ended up months later. The windows of each ward, reminiscent of castle windows, were small, fully latticed, and so high that we could not see the outside world at all. We could only see the sky from the yard. And the yard, when the wards were open, i.e. 7 a.m. until 12 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. until sunset, it was full of human figures reminiscent of the pre-war era and Turkish prisons, as featured in the movie: The Midnight Express. The songs that were heard from the prisoners' portable radios also contributed to this image: They were all popular songs with bouzouki of the sixties. These are a development of the Turkish amanes.



The second wing of the prisons of Aegina, after their closure

In ward 7 where I was taken, there were around nine of us. The ward was long and narrow, and the beds, from the window overlooking the courtyard to the far wall, were placed parallel to each other, without bedside tables. Opposite them was a wardrobe on which, at some point, a television appeared. Next to the closet was a wood stove. My own bed was next to the one by the window, which was occupied by a papatzis (a player of the forbidden card game papas=priest). In the background was a pimp, burly but smiling. I later learned from Sophia that his wife was also locked up in Korydallos Women's Prison. Next to me on the other side was a gypsy, Triantafyllos, who had a shaved head and had nothing with him

in the ward but a suit hung for the time he would be released. I also remember a young man who was of medium height and used a lot of prison slang words when he spoke. He expected to be released from prison any day. They called him Mezitis. I remember it because as soon as he got out he killed someone and went back to prison for life. When the wards were closed, those with portable radios listened to music, until the television appeared. I had said and they had brought me some difficult to understand books with nice binding, which I had bought earlier from my former kindergarten teacher. Among them was "The Essence of Christianity" by Feuerbach. Triantafyllos one day asked me to read it. I told him it was hard to understand but he insisted and I gave it to him. When they had us closed at night, until 10 p.m. that turned off the lights and left us only a little lamp at night, Triantafyllos was reading Feuerbach. Damn if he understood anything. Because when I decided to read it, I didn't understand either and it took me a year to read it. I guess the translation of the book from German was bad.

The food was distributed in the courtyard. They brought a large marmite, from which they put food for us with a large spoon, or large rectangular trays, from which they cut square pieces of food, like pasticcio, and gave them to us. There was also special food for the sick, usually mashed potatoes and chicken. The most common food was yachni potatoes, as warden Tomazidis called them, or bloom potatoes, as the prisoners called them, because it was a red soup, in which some coarse pieces of potato floated. Along with the food, they also gave us bread. After the meal, we cleaned the caravan and the spoon with the bread and then ate it. For better, some washed their caravan in the taps. The fountains were in the courtyard and had a long narrow large trough in front of them. We washed in them every morning. I don't remember the taps of the second wing, but I do remember the fourth. The bathrooms, two rooms, were next to the Turkish toilets. I think every day they had hot water. In the kitchen in the yard, a husky prisoner was making coffee. He spoke the dirtiest language I've ever heard in my life. He sold his coffees in the wards and was paid in plastic prison coins. The service gave us such coins according to the money we had in the prison deposit book. The circulation of money was prohibited, so as not to play games of chance. A small ward had been turned into a barbershop, where a young man, a prisoner for drugs, worked as a barber. The haircut was free but the barber cut like a bungler. Those who wanted to, bought a styrofoam box that served as an ice cooler. The ice cubes were brought and sold every morning. Every week each prisoner could fill in a paper with things they wanted from the "grocery store", something like a prison grocery store. They kept the money from his account. Garbage was collected in large bins with wheels, but I don't remember where they threw it. All the work was done by prisoners, redeeming with each day of work one day of punishment. The warden

with the guards accompanied the food and also locked and unlocked the wards. In each courtyard there was also a post for a guard to sit but I don't remember if they used it.

My new friends from the prison world

While I stayed in the second wing, I made some acquaintances. First of all, I mention a Saki from Pagrati who was inside for drugs. He was about my age and we had something to talk about. I remember that to tease me he called me Kyrizi, instead of Kyritsis, because "kyrizi" in the slang of the underworld meant a sucker. He must have come to our ward after me, because I remember him fighting with Triantafyllos in our closed ward. I never understood why they fought, however the episode happened when Sakis came to my bed to talk. I remember that in order to beat Triantafyllos who was more husky, he had made something like a bat out of the wires of a traditional broom. He didn't manage to do much, but luckily the fight stopped early, with the appearance of a prison guard who was called by Sakis. I think, that night, Triantafyllos slept in the discipline cell.

Another prisoner who approached me was a bald, middle-aged man with a limp who had the Greek and American flags, crossed, tattooed on his arm. This was Kimonas Emmanuelides. I remember him working all day long with beads to sell and gain the money for his cigarettes and other necessities. He was from Thessaloniki and he often told me stories about the notorious director of the Thessaloniki Security Police, Moushoudnis, and other stories about his travels and dealings in the then "Eastern bloc", i.e. the Soviet Union and the countries of the central and eastern Eastern Europe that was under its political and military control, as members of the Warsaw Pact. I found his stories so interesting that I suggested he write them. He knew very few letters, so I had offered to correct his writing. Our friendship lasted a few months, because it was interrupted by a new friendship of mine. This one was with a bank robber, Theodoros Tsouvalakis, and it would last for many years and he would also have a noticeable influence on me. Tsouvalakis had a fight with Kimonas, because he considered him a ruffian of the service. I never learned the truth, but I remember that Kimonas was hanging out with a giant guy called Costagogo, and his subsequent behavior had raised some questions for me.

But before I talk about Tsouvalakis, I would like to talk about some other prisoners I met. One of them was a tall, tanned young man who was in for the murder of a rich man who bought young men to have sex with. His life was destroyed when he joined the army. There he got involved with bad company and they led him to meet the victim. I remember that he also did manual labor, to get his cigarettes and other necessary things. I had also received from him an

engraving of the dog Pluto (from Walt Disney's cartoons). I asked him and he wrote me a dedication on its back. He wrote "23 years in prison for not eating my food."

Another prisoner was a grey-haired disfigured priest, George Georgantonakis. He was in for debt. He was an educated and good man, which is why he helped the prisoners, giving them legal advice and drawing up petitions for them. He had also come to our ward. A young prisoner with a very slangy walk and full of engravings and tattoos, Axypolytos, used to come and visit him. I would see both of them again in various phases of my many years of imprisonment and in other prisons besides Aegina. In fact, Axypolytos, together with a Chavantinos, would be tried by the same court that would try us.

Another prisoner I had some company with was a young man who had gone in for banana smuggling, i.e. he and his partner were selling bananas without a permit and for that they got a sentence of seven months. He seemed like a really good kid and didn't seem to have anything to do with the world of prisons and the underworld. He must have got out before serving seven months, after an Appeal Court reduced his sentence.

I had also taken a few walks in the forecourt, as we called it, with a tall and thin fellow, who had the walk and dress, and even the face, of the old Psyrri's tough gays. His views were very close to anarchist ideas and that's why we found topics for discussion. He was highly respected in ward 16, where the toughest prisoners were gathered. He, when he heard the prison bell ringing for us to go to our cells so that the guards would come later to lock us up, would say: "On your heads, for you, on our balls, for us." His name was Papadakis and when he was out of prison, he made denunciations to journalists about the atrocities that took place in prisons.

The first political prisoner I met in prison: Giannis Pitsikas

A month after I was transferred to the prison of Aegina, another political prisoner, a young man, Giannis Pitsikas, was brought to my cell. He had been caught near the Museum for participating in an illegal demonstration that resulted in minor incidents and he was on trial. He had long blonde hair that when he was lying down, and I would sit on his bed to talk, I would put my hand on his pillow for support and pull it against him, without wanting to. He had told me that he was from Kalamata and had a mother who, instead of taking his side, cursed him and told him to "kneel in front of them" so that they would let him go. Because he was waiting for court he had prepared his apology in a school notebook. One night he got colic in the kidney he was suffering from and we were yelling at the guards to get him some painkillers. The painkillers they brought him, some Aspirins I guess they didn't do anything to him and he was suffered a lot that night.

With much effort, they opened the ward and took him to the infirmary. From there he must have been sent to the Korydallos prisoners' hospital, but, as I later learned, he was also sent to the prisoners' psychiatric hospital. Several years after I was released from prison, at least 19, he found my phone and called me at my house. He lived in Kalamata at the time and was a bailiff. We had called several times. He had a wife who was suffering from multiple sclerosis and she was in bed in very bad shape. One day he told me that he would come to Athens for a heart operation and he would call me to meet. He didn't pick me up and I never heard from him again. I have the notebook with the draft of his apology.

The legendary American lifer Roger Raney

The prisoner with whom I spent the most time was an American lifer, Roger Raney. He had already spent 18 years in prison and although he was around 45 he had no teeth. He had been sentenced to death for the murder of two of his Greek naval associates, whose bodies were never found and he never admitted his guilt either. His death sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment by the king's pardon. He was still hoping to be released before serving his life sentence, so he had asked me to get him a lawyer. I assigned the case to a lawyer from the anarchist milieu who was coming and seeing me without pay, Eleni Dimoulea. Helen had failed to do anything and Raney was furious with her, saying she was "sleeping with the District Attorney"! Raney had his own cubicle on the wing, where I would go and talk. I really enjoyed talking with him, because I practiced my English. Raney, despite almost 20 years in prison, had not learned Greek and did not hang out with other prisoners. He hang out with me so much that he would sit and listen to me read a travel guide to him in English in order to correct my pronunciation. He had a trunk full of university books on Entomology and he had told me that he had spent so many years in prison studying Entomology. He had also taught me to drink Nescafe straight and considered Nescafe to be something of a panacea for all common ailments. In summer, he closed the window panes of his ward and from 12 to 2.30p.m. he was getting drenched in sweat. When they opened us at 2.30, he ran to the bathrooms and took a shower with cold water. He told me that it was good for his health. He had a mother in America, in Kansas City, where he was born, who sent him \$30 a month. He lived on them, making a terrible economy and did not mix with working hands. I talked a lot with him about the United States, the States, as he called them. He had lived in the American South during the 1950s, which was known, among other things, for its large cars that Americans drove as teenagers. Raney used to tell me that the first thing I had to learn in my life was to drive a car.

Unfortunately, I didn't listen to him, and I never managed to get a license, while I rarely drove a car. I only drove my father's, which I drove from Melissia to Vrilissia and vice versa. Also, he was telling me that if I ever buy pistols, when I go to America (which I never did, after all), I should buy them in pairs. I don't remember why. He knew of pistols when he was in America and practiced near a river. My association with Raney lasted until about my trial, that is, about five months. Then I changed wing and never saw him again. I learned, however, that he had been disciplinary transferred, because he had made wine from a type of cocoa, Obomaltini, which we could and did order from the grocer. I had also seen in my ward, 7, that they were making wine from Obomaltini. In fact, I had tried it and did not notice any difference from normal wine. Raney left me a box of French word-learning cards, each card a word and a sketch, and the book Microbe Hunters in English with a dedication, which I read some thirty-five years later. Very nice book.



Roger Raney at his trial, probably 1961.



Another more representative photo of Raney from his trial

The brilliant gentleman robber Theodoros Tsouvalakis

As I said before, the friendship that would last for years and exert a remarkable influence on my life was with Theodoros Tsouvalakis. He was in for a spectacular bank robbery in Nikaia, which I had heard live on a taxi radio while I was still out. The robbery had failed, because he and his brother who had committed it, did not have time to escape. They were chased by people waiting at a bus stop outside the bank and an off-duty policeman. They were throwing the robbery money to the street to delay the people chasing them. Finally, they took refuge in a house, where they took the occupants hostages. The police besieged them for some hours and during those hours the live broadcast I mentioned above took place. In the end they surrendered after negotiations. The robbers were from a poor family of Drapetsona with three siblings in a public psychiatric hospital, which is why their adventure had moved the "panhellenic" community. Thodoras, as we called him, the one of the two brothers I met, was a very intelligent man and spoke very well. He was blond and short but with his style, even though he was short, he had managed to make everyone respect him. But he also had a scar on his palm from an earlier stabbing attack. He was staying in ward 12, where out of respect he had been given a bed near the window. He was so comfortable in his movements that once, in the morning, shortly after the opening of the wards, he went angrily out

and scolded the prisoners who were making noise outside his window saying, "Why do you make such a fuss and wake me up at seven o'clock? If I wanted to wake up in the morning, I would become a worker and not a robber." And the prisoners heard him and left.



Me in front of ward 12 of the second wing of the prison of Aegina, where I stayed with Theodoros Tsouvalakis, in 1978 (the photo is after the final closure of the prison)

With this Thodoras I walked most of the time up and down the courtyard. Sometimes a pimp walked with us, who exercised a lot and was like an athlete. He had to be trained to beat non-paying customers. He didn't see that he had done anything wrong. He dreamed of opening a club with women, where good people would come and not vagrants! Theodore was telling me about his travels abroad. He had also visited the Isle of Man in the English Channel. I was telling him about anarchy. He had a real sense of humor and was a joy to listen to. On the other hand he had a tendency to be impressed by expensive consumer goods and it was from him that I first heard about famous brands of cigarettes, colognes, soaps and shoes. As I heard for the American magazine "Soldier of Fortune" that his brother was reading. In fact, at some point, he convinced me and I asked my brother to bring me such "branded" consumer goods, for me and Theodore. Specifically, I remember Adidas shoes and Tabac Original soap. From Theodore I learned to see Greece as a culturally backward and regressive country. I remember, in a series of reports made by the then journalist George Lianis about the prisons, which then

he published in a book, the report he dedicates to Theodore, he titles it "An Anarchist". There Theodore says that the Greeks are "shepherds and waiters". This view of his had made me place Greece in the right place, in relation to the countries of Western Europe. On the other hand, I successfully propagated anarchy to Theodore. He went so far as to send a letter (he knew enough English) to the English anarchist newspaper Freedom, when I gave him the address he asked for. In the letter he told about his crime and said that he and his brother were anarchists. The recipients of the letter believed him and published his letter in the newspaper.



Thodoros Tsouvalakis on the right and his brother Nikos on the left in a photo from their arrest some months before I met him

Tsouvalakis was the one who gave me the idea not to apologize at my trial but to submit an apologetic statement. This suited me like a glove, because I considered the long-term pretrial detention of me and Sophia for a trivial offense as a challenge to my dignity, and that is why I had made the decision not to do them the favor of legitimizing the trial with my participation. And Sophia liked the idea. However, what I could not imagine, because from a young age I learned that in prisons were people locked up with heavy sentences because they had committed some serious crime, were the sentences that would be given to us for such a trivial crime, such as manufacturing, possession and the concealment of 8 Molotov cocktails. In my lifetime, I have seen people who have committed no crime, such as undocumented immigrants, not only be imprisoned but killed, with the approval of the legislature and the judiciary. Legislature (MPs) make laws against human rights and when

their implementation leads to deaths, the judiciary never convicts the murderers. But then, at the age of 21, although an anarchist and a follower of violence against power's violence, I could not imagine the scale of criminality that characterizes the state. Today I can say with certainty that the biggest criminal is the state. And yet the state has succeeded in such a way that society, in its majority, cannot stand without it, and in many cases the state is the only one that can oppose the mob and the various mafias. In short, "cliff ahead and stream behind".

In conclusion, I would like to say about the environment I experienced in prison before my trial, that it had nothing to do with the image I had in my mind of prisons before I entered it myself. When I was out, I thought prison life was torturous and the prisoners worse than the free. I found that life in prison can be better than outside for some people and that prisoners are just like free people, i.e. there are good and bad. And because I, before entering prison, was going through a difficult life, full of uncertainty, even with exhausting tension in my relationship with Sophia, I saw prison as an opportunity to rest. Physically and mentally. All this colorfulness and vibrancy that I encountered made me feel like I was at a festival. Of course, I had a rudimentary financial comfort, because my mother and my brother came regularly and my father also came at some stage, and they, whenever they came, put money in my account. I could count myself among the rich of the wing. I could even buy handiworks or participate in raffles for them to help out the rest. Payment was made with packs of cigarettes, since real money was forbidden. The cigarettes that functioned as money were the "Rekor" (=record) that cost 12 drachmas. I used to smoke these. They were the second cheapest filter cigarettes after the cheapest filter cigarettes at the time. The cheapest of all were the "First" which I think cost 10 drachmas. I remember a short, middle-aged prisoner with a big head who, in order to survive, washed other people's clothes and was paid in "Rekor" packets. I had once given him some blankets to wash. He washed the clothes in some troughs that were where the bathrooms and toilets were. I remember him, when they brought the food, shouting to the people to come: "The leek blew up" (came). Another time he added: "Prison irons are for suckers and not for brave lads."

From Aegina to Athens to be tried and sentenced to a heavy penalty in a rigged political trial

I do not remember the details of my transfer from Aegina to the court. I only remember that the court was held in the building of offices near Arsakeio, where today the seat of the Council of State is. I also remember that it was a Five-Judge Court of Appeal, meaning that we would have no right of appeal, as even the rapists have who killed their victims.

All five members of the court were judges. And no indictment was issued before we were brought to trial, so that we could challenge it. Even for the most heinous crimes they issued and still issue indictments. But we, me and Sophia, for the "legal culture" of the time, experienced the status of exception, as tens of thousands of immigrants without passports experience today, who can be beaten, raped, even killed by a fascist, in uniform or no, and the police will do nothing about it, nor the justice system. To legitimize the rape of justice, which the democracy of the first years after the dictatorship carried out in our case, in the Arms and Explosives Act 495 of 1976, they had inserted an article, 13, which abolished all procedural guarantees in favor of the accused , if the prosecutor and the investigator accused them that they had the weapons and explosives to give them to others to commit crimes. In our case, they didn't find others, but they didn't even know when and where the molotov cocktails were made, as they should. They didn't even present against us an opinion from an army pyrotechnician, certifying that the Molotov cocktails are explosives, even though the whole world knew and knows that the Molotov cocktails are incendiary and not explosive, and even though Papadopoulos's lawyer, the New Democracy MP Sergakis , had officially requested the army's expert opinion. And as if all this wasn't enough, when Sophia and I refused to legitimize the rape of justice by participating in the trial and that's why we didn't bring lawyers or defense witnesses, the court imposed as our lawyer the lawyer of Papadopoulos who he argued for us the same as the prosecutor, i.e. that we took the Molotov cocktails to Papadopoulos! At the time, I thought that such violation of procedural guarantees in favor of the accused and such extreme violations of the laws against the accused, were only happening to us, whom the front pages of daily newspapers in Athens, such as "Ta Nea", presented us as bombers who intended to burn Athens! Since then I have found that the violation of procedural guarantees in favor of the accused and such extreme violations of the law against the accused, is commonplace in the Greek courts, when the accused are people from vulnerable groups of the population, such as immigrants, Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, the extradited and in general, those who belong to the categories of the population that Hitler's Nazis led to the gas wards for extermination.

Another element of contempt for justice by those who have it as a profession, was that on the day they tried us on charges that could have brought us a full 25 years in prison as a sentence, they had scheduled 36 more trials! That is, they were willing, if they could hurry, by preventing the accused from defending themselves (which judges are wont to do by dismissing defense witnesses they consider irrelevant and rejecting defense counsel's questions to prosecution witnesses), to distribute in a single day many hundreds or even thousands of years in prison. Worse than the summary proceedings of the courts of the French Revolution.

Two small rooms without windows: The Athens Transit Police Department

So, because on the same day the judges had scheduled another 36 trials, I, Sophia, and dozens of other defendants with serious charges, we waited sitting side by side in the chairs of the hall, which were for the listeners. The same rapid procedures as the judges apply to those with flagrant offenses. Among those who were waiting were Axypolitos and Tsavantinos. During the breaks of the trials that preceded ours, relatives would come and talk to us. Some comrades also came. I told them that I would "clean up" (be acquitted) and in the afternoon I would be with them in Exarchia. As it turned out, I had no idea what Greek Justice means. But which afternoon? The whole of the first day and the second passed without being judged. And I, all this time and until the trial ended and the decision came out (there was also a weekend in between), five whole days, I was kept in the Athens transit police station which only had two small rooms without windows for prisoners. Dozens of people were crammed into these small rooms, as they still do in police stations and detention centers at international airports in Greece. Except that now the vast majority of those incarcerated are immigrants. In this way, as with the many trials in one day, judges and police intend to make you feel like an insignificant number, just as the concentration camp authorities always intended to make the inmates of the camps feel. And we slept on the floor, because not only were there no beds in the two "transition" rooms they had us, but there was nothing, except some old dirty mattresses as thin as cigarette papers. I don't remember blankets. After all, it was early September and it wasn't cold. Among my fellow inmates in the "transit" I remember Axypolitos who, when he ordered and was brought food from outside, he would put it in front of me and say "kutuposou" (eat), in the language of the prison. Also one who told us about his smuggling exploits in Eastern Bloc countries, and a frogman, as they call those who serve in the Underwater Disaster Teams. The frogman was short and muscular and had a kind face, not like those who serve in the special forces. Well, one night he was telling us about the mess that prevailed at that time in the navy in terms of equipment. I remember him telling us that they have some ships that when you kick them, they're so rotten your foot gets in their sheet metal. He had been sent all the way to Panama to train and knew a lot about frogmen. He attributed the mess to the misdeeds of the officers, namely to the fact that the money that the state had for equipment, they put in their pockets instead of renewing the equipment.

The tasteless theater of the trial of two unrepentant anarchists: Our trial

Finally our trial took place on the third day the court met. I, to challenge the court, wore a white t-shirt with a pocket at chest height (Tsouvalakis had given it to me), I had a beard and long hair tied with a rubber band and black small round glasses. Sophia was wearing a shirt that said 'Roc' on the back. And when we were sitting in the dock and being judged, we would kiss from time to time. The two lawyers who were with us in the investigation, Takis Pappas and Katerina Iatropoulou, were present in court, and when we told the judges that we had no lawyers, the president asked them to be appointed ex officio. But they cited our own decision not to have lawyers, and that's why they didn't accept. Then the court appointed Papadopoulos' lawyer who, instead of being in our favor, was against us. As prosecution witnesses were called many unrelated people, some of whom should normally be witnesses for our defense. For example, they had brought my father as a prosecution witness, who, of course, did everything he could to defend me. He told them that I was an excellent student in high school, that I entered the university with a scholarship, that I got a scholarship again and that I suffered from "hypersensitivity" and that is why sometime they had taken me to the psychiatrist Mr. Yfantis. Apparently, my ill-fated father thought that if they were to condemn me, they would thereby recognize a reduced imputation. He was begging them to let me go to finish my studies. In it, the president of the court Karamagiolis, had assured him that I would never finish my studies. I took care in the future to refute him, but my father did not live to see it.

When it came the time for my apology, the president asked me if I thought it was right to plant bombs. I told him that I don't plant bombs and I shouldn't be judged because other people plant bombs. Then he asked me if I approved of the bombings or if I condemned them and I told him that I did. Cutting him off, I asked to read my apology, which I had already submitted written. I couldn't even read half of it and he cut me off saying that he won't accept me reading unless I apologize verbally. He must have been angry, because I had written the apology in the archaic slang that was then the language of laws and courts, so that the accused would not understand what was being done against them, and I was ridiculing our judges by saying that if for a coil of wire, some burlap, some bottles of cleaning petrol and a can of petrol, things that can be found in most homes, we were considered terrorists, imagine what they would have thought of us if we had some "Mitsos" car repair shop full of a bunch of materials that can be considered materials for bomb making. With something like that he heard, he didn't let me read my apology note. He sent me to sit down and listened to the prosecutor Aravantinos who presented us as dangerous terrorists and the lawyer of Papadopoulos who said that we brought the Molotov cocktails to Papadopoulos.

Then he stopped the trial until next Monday, when he will give us the decision. On Monday, they sentenced me to 18 years in prison on three counts, aggregate sentence 9, and Sophia, with the mitigating factor of being a teenager, to 9 years in prison, aggregate sentence 5. I greeted the sentences by shouting, "Anarchy never dies!" . Of course I was applauded by the audience.

They put us in a Black Maria to take us to the prisons, Sophia to Korydallos and me to the Piraeus transit police station. As the Black Maria moved away from the courts down Panepistimiou street, our comrades ran behind. The last one left behind us was Michael. I would see him again in my life, fifteen years later, at the funeral of Katerina Gogou. I would see Sophia again after many months since I would have previously gone on hunger strikes with this request. I may have spent the night in "Metagoron" (transit police station) in Piraeus, I don't remember. I only remember that on the wall of my room (it had three rooms) I drew a big alpha in a circle and above it I wrote "PHILIPPAS 9 YEARS" and below "SOPHIA 5 YEARS".

Return to Aegina and change of wing – Comrade Vangelis Lambrou

In Aegina, Tsouvalakis had the idea to change the wing and go to the fourth, where in one ward they only had foreigners and among them Thodoras knew one called Christian, who told me he was a very good boy. We told a warden named Libertas (which means freedom in Italian) and he gave us the license to change. We had to carry our beds from one wing to another. A comrade who I was seeing for the first time and who was not in for political reasons helped me move. He was for voluntary abduction, because he had taken his girlfriend Litsa Tsagaraki from her father's house with her own accord and her father had sued him, because Litsa was a minor. His name was Vangelis Lambrou and I never saw him again. And he and Litsa, however, made history. Litsa and her sister Katerina, whom I happened to meet later, were wanted at one time (in 1980) for arson of large department stores in the center of Athens, as was Vangelis. Fortunately, in the end they were not tried with such charges.

Vangelis, when he was released, published a magazine about the prisons and about the struggles in our milieu, "Out of control", from which he published a total of 3 issues. Then he published a pamphlet titled "Controlled." The father of the girls who had sued Vangelis, committed suicide in those years. But Vangelis also committed suicide after several years, at a young age anyway. Tsouvalakis, if I'm not mistaken, ended up in ward 12 of the fourth ray, while I ended up in ward 2 with the foreigners. I put my bed next to Christian's bed, which was against the back wall of the ward. My meeting with Christian would be unforgettable for me and would be the "swan song" of his life.

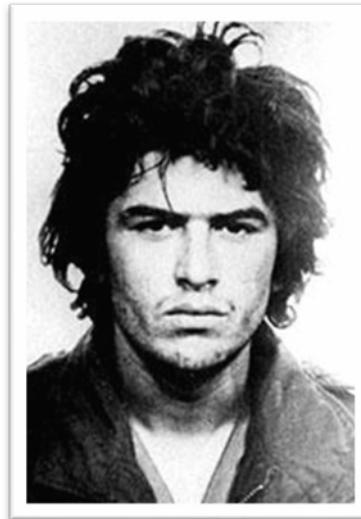
**A prisoner whose friend I was even after prison, perhaps his best friend:
Cornelios Louloudis - Three underaged in the prison of long-term convicts**



Cornelios Louloudis at the time I met him.

In the fourth wing I found other interesting people. I found Cornelios Louloudis who was introduced to me by Thodoras. This time he was inside for burning the Greek flag in a high school, as he said, but he had already been in prison other times. He was entering in prisons from the time he was a minor. He was a year older than me. His most famous crime, up to that time, was the robbery of Villa Zura. Cornelios was the youngest member of a gang that entered the villa and tied up the Zura couple to question them about the money. I don't remember if they took out any significant amount. This had been done during the dictatorship when the tortures in the Security Police were usual, with the consequence that Cornelios suffered, when he was caught, terrible tortures. Cornelios lived in ward 3 and spent his evenings writing poems, lots of poems. Poems in measure and rhyme that referred to the prisons and his own adventures, in a style of denunciation of the injustices against the wretches. I remember a collection of over 100 poems

with the title "Albatross in the islands of Themis". My friendship with Louloudis was to last longer than any other friendship I had with a prisoner of the common penal code. In order to get his cigarettes, Louloudis would draw drawings on paper that another prisoner would engrave on copper. This prisoner's name was Michalis Prekas and he was in for car thefts. He was also a good boy and was in and out of prisons since he was young, just like Louloudis. In the future, he too would make history. And not as a criminal prisoner but as a revolutionary of the anti-authoritarian milieu. I, when I met him, he had nothing to do with anarchy, but he had a great hatred for the police for torturing him when they caught him, and to get revenge on them, he used to dirty the police cars with feces. From this, in his neighborhood, Brahami, he was known by the nickname "Coprolas". Having such a past he "tended a receptive ear" to my own anarchist views which also appealed to Louloudis. After all, anarchy preaches a society without police and without prisons, which appeals to many who have been tortured by the police and spent their best years in prison. I, of course, when Prekas said that he agreed with me, I could not imagine that he would become an anarchist! After all, he didn't seem like a thinking person. Instead, he was a man of action. When he wasn't making handicrafts, he was playing football with others in the courtyard, i.e. in the inner courtyard of the wing. Football was played almost every afternoon.



Michalis Prekas in a photo released by the police, probably after his murder, 8 years after we met

Another very interesting prisoner, Stefanos, short, square and a great humorist, also played football. He was also involved in thefts, in fact one of them was the theft of a luxury car, Mercedes brand, belonging to a famous folk singer,

Stelios Kazantzidis. Fortunately, when the case went to court, Kazantzidis withdrew the lawsuit, so Stefanos was not convicted of stealing Kazantzidis' car. And I hung out with Stefanos a lot, even after we got out of prison.

Although the prison of Aegina was a prison intended for prisoners with heavy sentences, and in the past also for death row inmates, the republic of that time also sent juveniles, in the hope that the tough prisoners would rape them, when the minors had shown so much virtue and courage in prison which the bodyguards could not tolerate. I met three of these minors in the fourth ward of the Aegina prison. One was Spyridis, a tall, husky young man of 18 or 19, who always had a smile on his face. A key that opens handcuffs was hung around his neck, until he found the right opportunity to unlock the handcuffs that would be put on him in some transfer. The other was Kostas Kypraios, a medium-height, thick, husky, square young man of 18 or 19 years old, who was also a close friend of Spyridis, a "colleague" so to speak. The third was a Cretan of the same age who had been given twelve years in prison, because shooting at a wedding in Crete, as is the custom, he had killed someone unintentionally. All three minors (those who had turned 21 were legally considered adults at that time) had been brought from the rural prison of Volos, "Kassavetia", because they had escaped. Their escapes were considered such great crimes that they were sent to the prison of Aegina, to be harmed by the other prisoners. They did not succeed in this, because all three were brave lads. The first two were in for thefts, and usually thieves are the most orderly inmates and therefore have a good name in prisons.

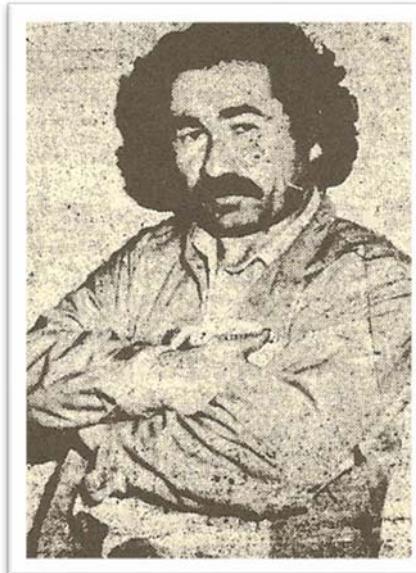
The revolutionary Giannis Serifis

But as much as the prisoners I mentioned above were of interest to me, no one was as important to me as the political prisoner Giannis Serifis who had recently been brought to Aegina from the prison of Korydallos. When we met in the fourth wing of Aegina prison, he had already been in prison for almost a year, and a strong support movement had been built up outside that made the guards wary of him. He was about 18 years older than me, so he had a lot to tell me about the movement. He had also spent many years as an immigrant abroad. But just the fact that, at last, I could find a man with whom I could discuss revolutionary ideas, was of great value to me. I could not discuss many things with Pitsikas because he was years younger than me and had no history in the movement. It was only natural, then, that after my meeting with the Serifis, I should take most of the walks in the yard with him. After all, only by walking in the courtyard could we discuss matters that we did not want others to hear. If we were talking in the ward, there would

always be someone to listen to what we said and convey it to the service. It happened, however, that once I had gone to his ward to show me something, it happened to be the time when they closed the wards for noon and they also closed the Serifis' ward, not noticing that I was inside. When later I called to them to open for me, so that I could go to my cell, they lost their fun and after taking me to my cell, they called the Serifis to the Chief Warden office, to give them an account of what happened.

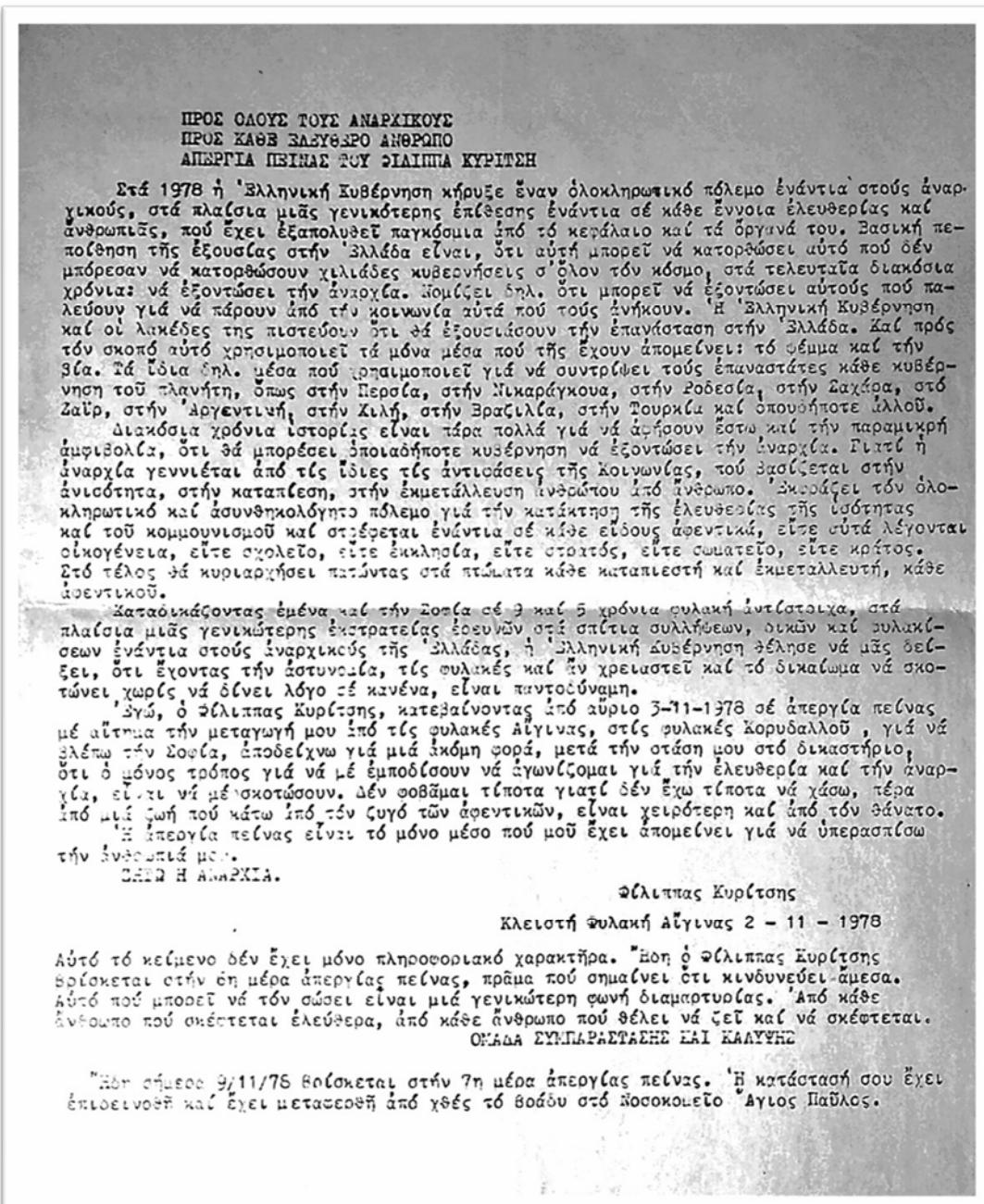
Serifis awaited his court from month to month. I, however, had already been sentenced to 9 years in prison and Sophia to 5. And while the law provided for one visit per month between me and Sophia because we were husband and wife, they kept me in Aegina and not in Korydallos, so that I could not benefit from the law. Their intention was I to see Sophia again after four and a half years, when her sentence would end. Until then, we were obliged to limit our communication to one letter per week, and this was read by the warden in charge of censoring letters, because then letters were censored. In other words, we were obliged to let all the guards know what we said to each other. I could not accept this situation without protest for the next four and a half years. So I decided to react by going on a hunger strike.

Considering myself a member of a movement, before I went on strike, I wrote a text about the strike and took it out secretly, so that they could make a proclamation. As they did.



Giannis Serifis at the time I met him

A strike reminiscent of medieval princess-inspired jousting: My first hunger strike in order to be able to see my mate Sophia



The proclamation that came out for my first hunger strike and contains the text I took out secretly from prison

And so, one fine day in November 1978, I filled out a telegram to the prosecutor of execution of sentences, where I wrote that I was going on a hunger strike to be transferred to Korydallos and have the visits with Sophia, which the law provides for, and I dropped it in the mail box that was on some wall. When the guards, or rather director Kostaras, read it the other day, they came to my ward and told me that a hunger strike did not take place in a ward and therefore if I wanted to continue, they would lock me up in a disciplinary cell. Of course, I preferred to continue and that's how I got to know the disciplinary cells of the prison of Aegina, where they used to lock up death row inmates, and then, in 1978, they locked up those who wanted to torture away from the eyes of the public. This is how my experience of Greek prison discipline cells began, where, until I was released, I would earn a total of around two months.

The disciplinary cells of Aegina were very small long narrow cells that were so narrow that if you reached out your hands you would grab the walls. On some walls they had rings to "crucify" the prisoner and beat him. They had nothing but a very thin and dirty mattress and two gray military blankets. All the cells faced a corridor, where every now and then a guard walked and looked through the peephole of the heavy iron door, to see what the prisoner was doing. Before they put you inside, they took the laces and the belt. They didn't have a toilet and to relieve yourself you had to have the door opened by the guard to go to a communal Turkish toilet. You weren't allowed cigarettes but I think you could have a bottle of water in the cell. Once a day they opened for you for about half an hour, so you could take a walk in the corridor to stretch.

I, from the first time I entered the discipline cell, did not feel suffocated. Instead, I felt that I found the peace that I had been deprived of for so long living in wards. I spent the whole day lying down covered with the blankets. I was thinking about the past, present and future. After all, the hunger strike from one point onwards, when you start to be hungry, dominates your thinking and all you care about is overcoming your hunger with the strength of your soul. And you find such strength when you feel the victim of an unspeakable injustice and it is unbearable for you to continue living, without doing anything to react to the harm they do to you. When you strike, you feel that you are doing something and you are not left like a cow in butcher's hands. The struggle you do, and which you feel because you are hungry, gives you dignity, self-respect and the strength to continue. If, in fact, you do not miss the others, the fellow prisoners, then you can reach the point where I was, thinking that the discipline cell would not be heavy for me if I did not suffer from hunger.

After five days in the disciplinary cell, they put me in a Black Maria and sent me by ferry to Piraeus and from there directly to the prisoner hospital "Agios Pavlos" which belongs to the Korydallos prison complex. There they assured me that my request would be accepted and I stopped the strike. They deceived me but I don't remember if, at least, I managed to have a visit with Sophia. My relatives had also come to the hospital and seen me. I don't remember if my father came too. I only remember that whenever my father came to see me, he spoke so disparagingly of my ideas as well as of the fanaticism with which I defended them, that we always quarreled. I liked the hospital, though. Perhaps because the hospital was built in the 60's while the prison of Aegina was built in the 1820's. I felt, therefore, that being in the hospital I was returning from the distant past to modern reality. And then the prisoner hospital was not overcrowded, as it is today, with the consequence that the patients are piled up like sardines in a can. Nor did AIDS exist, so that some would be isolated like lepers and the rest would be afraid of getting infected too. Even the head nurses, Mrs. Vlachou and Mrs. Koutandou, both short and curvy, were kind to the patients, while guards did not walk around the hospital. Then the doctor in charge of me was Bezaitis. After my release from prison I had met him a couple of times on the Vrilissia bus but I didn't say anything to him. After a few days after the end of the strike, I don't remember how many, he sent me back to the prison of Aegina.

The best guy of the fourth wing (according to the murderer by the police Michalis Prekas) : Christian Schluder

Fortunately in Aegina I had Christian close to me. Christian was a wonderful man. He was then 27 years old and had already traveled the world a bit and had adopted an alternative, so to speak, lifestyle. He was in because he had been busted at the airport, along with an English Oxford University student and an English woman, for six kilos of Indian cannabis they had in their luggage on their way back from India. 17 years had been given to the Englishman, 14 to Christian and a couple or more to the young lady. The young lady got out very quickly and after a few years the Englishman got out too, because they had money and used them properly. Christian did not. His father was a craftsman from a left-wing family and had participated in the great uprising that took place in Vienna in the 30s. And so he had already spent six years in prison. In Aegina, Christian worked as a garbage collector, i.e. he collected the garbage in one or two large bins and took them out of the wing to go and empty them. So he could visit all the rays, something the rest of us weren't allowed to do. I do not know, only, if he was visiting the radius of the junta, the 5th. Its prisoners had been imprisoned after the dictatorship for very serious crimes they had committed as officers during it. In

Aegina I had heard that they were the famous torturers, military police officers, Theofilogiannakos and Hatzizisis.

Christian took a bath after every garbage haul. He took at least two baths a day. Except for the bath which he did after carrying the garbage, he also took a bath after his exercise. For exercise he did 50 laps in the courtyard, quite a long distance, if you consider that I, who did some exercise, had never done more than twenty at one time. He also practiced yoga. He had taught me too and I did. I was able to sit in the lotus position for quite some time and also be able to stand with my head down and my feet in the air for a few minutes. Christian could and did stand for a long time. Also, Christian was an amazing cook. In the kitchen of the wing used to make some excellent Indian food worthy to lick your fingers. He shared it with me and a German, Kurt, whose bed was perpendicular to ours and who also worked as a barber. And I think Kurt was cooking too. We ate Christian's food while drinking Coca-Cola. That period was the only time I drank coke in my life. Another drink I learned from Christian was "lassi", milk in foam form. I also learned about yogurt with fruit.

Inside the ward, as in all wards, because everyone was entitled to a transistor, there was a commotion. But Christian had managed to get special permission to have a large, portable radio, which could reach the highest volume of all the transistors in the wing. On this radio we always listened to rock music or reggae. It was from Christian that I learned about the existence of the great songwriter Bob Marley. Until then I had not heard anything about him even though he was known in America and Europe and had given concerts in the major European capitals. Christian also taught me to play Scrabble. I didn't even know this game existed until then. Of course we played it in English which was also the language we spoke to each other. We even played chess. When we started playing chess, I used to beat him. But when he studied a German chess book, I never beat him again. And besides playing and yoga, we also read. At the time, I was reading an American book that I had bought in England, about the most famous guerrilla organization of the 70s in the United States, the "Weathermen". I was also reading a book that Christian had given me that was in fashion at the time in hippie circles, "A Stranger in a Strange Land", in English of course. In a few words Christian had opened the door to another world for me, a beautiful world. And we dreamed that we would live in this world even after prison. We had agreed to go together to Jamaica, home of Bob Marley who was then at the height of his glory.

Two ever-smiling prisoners from Sub-Saharan Africa

In addition to Christian, I also kept company to another foreigner from my room, where, when I went, I was the only Greek. This was the Negro George Coffey

from Ghana. He was a sailor and he too had been imprisoned for Indian hemp. He was a young man taller than me with a perfect body, which blacks usually have, and hair that doesn't grow long never, because the hairs keep wrapping around their base. George didn't like this and every now and then he would strive for hours to untangle them. When he untangled them, his hair became like a bush, afana, as we called it back then. George was always funny, like all the black people I've hung out with in my life. And he also had a great thirst for education. He spent his evenings reading and solving exercises from some books that were preparing him to take exams to get a high school diploma in his country. He also compiled a dictionary of the language of his tribe, which, he told me, was a poor language and had no words for all the English words. George translated every English word into the language of his tribe. English, which is also the official language of Ghana, I also spoke with George. We were talking about the bad things in the world and I soon discovered, that George's interest was genuine. I found this out when he asked me to read an "Introduction to Sociology" that I had bought by mail order from England. I had bought quite a few science books from England by mail when I was in prison. George was an avid reader. He continued to read "Introduction to Sociology" even when the lights went out and we were left us with only a small night's lamp. The light bulb was above the iron door of the ward. George would go below it and read. Many years later, I found that the book George was reading was a misprint. Fortunately the faulty pages were towards the end. George must not have gone all the way, or he would have told me, I suppose.

At some point, later, another sailor from Ghana was brought into our ward. He too was very interested in reading. I was impressed that he had bought a large American dictionary from me, giving me paper money that he had hidden inside the prison. And he had given me much. He had given me five hundred (drachmas), the price I had paid for it.

Two completely different prisoners from the richest country in the Middle East that the war turned into ruins

But most of the reading in the ward was done by a crippled (he couldn't walk) old Lebanese man who was in for big scams as I had heard. He, however, did not read books but documents. I guess they had something to do with his case file and his businesses. His bed was two beds over from mine, so when I had something to say to Christian that I didn't want him to hear, I would turn on Christian's portable ITT radio. I had heard he was a snitch. And I consider it possible, because he must have been a fascist. I had deduced this from seeing him hang out with a far-right bomber who was brought into our wing one fine day, one Protopappas, who was given a life sentence for a series of bombings, even in cinemas, which had injured

people . Where would you always find the bomber? Always next to the Lebanese's bed, when the wards were open. And this Lebanese fascist was not the only one. There were other Lebaneses in the wing, all, as I knew, for drugs. In ward 3 was a George Hasko who was a tailor and he had told me himself that in the Lebanese civil war he had killed many. One more Lebanese I didn't talk to but I mention him because he had a bad end, was a short, fat, middle-aged man who had a license and bought meat that he cooked in the kitchen of the wing: Abu Ali Abu Liazid.

But the most likeable Lebanese was "Hasanaki", as he called himself. He was a blonde and a Muslim from the city of Nabatieh in southern Lebanon. Before he was caught and imprisoned in Greece, he had already spent four years in Europe, most of it in Germany, where he also had a girlfriend. He did not believe in any god and therefore, in order to have the support of the prison priest, he had been baptized a Christian. He had no intention of returning to his homeland. From what he told me, when he lived in Nabatieh, there was no police there either. Only a few police jeeps showed up when needed. Yet Nabatieh was at the center of Lebanon's civil war and, because it had a Muslim population, was repeatedly bombed by the Israeli air force.

The late Spyros Kotretos - My second hunger strike

It must have been late autumn or early winter 1978-1979, when Spyros Kotretos, a tall man with a crooked nose, I think, and a heavy voice, and above all a lot of humor, came to our wing from the disciplinary prison of Corfu. We immediately became friends. He listened carefully to what I told him and agreed. He even agreed with my feminist views, which he substantiated with his own examples and experiences. He was a few years older than me but had more or less the same experiences from the Greek culture of the time. He also rejected the Greek folk songs and listened only to rock and reggae. His dislike of folk songs was such that one afternoon when a state radio station was playing Bob Dylan and classic rock, we took Christian's portable radio out to the patio in front of my ward and turned the volume all the way up to cover the folk that could be heard from the small portable radios from different parts of the courtyard. Kotretos and I had dreams. We dreamed of going to Mongolia and riding the famous Mongolian horses. He too, however, had a bad end. But previously made history.

The time had come for Serifis to go to court. I wished him luck and asked him if he could get me a text out. He volunteered to take it out, but the guards caught it in the search, and when he had left the prison, they called me to the chief jailers office and scolded me. Fortunately, they were limited to scold me verbally. In court, the Serifis was acquitted and the extreme left celebrated the victory of democracy. Fortunately, the lawyer Katerina Iatropoulou was also there and she declared to the journalists that there were also me and Sophia who were unjustly in prison. When I saw the Serifis after my release, he told me that he had made

statements about us as well, though the journalists did not publish them. But even I, after the acquittal of Serifis, did not remain idly. I decided to go on a hunger strike again to be transferred to Korydallos, so that I could visit Sophia, as well as to improve the living conditions in the prison. In fact, when Kotretos found out that I was going to go on strike, he decided to go on strike too with requests to improve living conditions, in order to support me. So he came to my ward and we compiled a four-page report to the prosecutor in charge of the prison about the living conditions, which included Kotretos' statement that he was going on hunger strike. We dropped it in the letter box along with my telegram to the same prosecutor announcing my strike and my demands. The next day they came and took us for the disciplinary cells.

Unfortunately, Kotretos did not continue the strike after the third day and I was left to strike on my own until the fifth day, after which I was taken on a transfer to Korydallos.

Korydallos' Prisoners' Psychiatric Hospital

In Korydallos they didn't take me to the prisoners' hospital, like the first time. They took me to the prisoners' psychiatric hospital located in the same building complex. And luckily they didn't take me to a ward but to a cell.

In the cell to which I was taken, I was fortunate enough to find an Englishman, a native of London, namely a connoisseur of the London idiom known as "Cockney." He had also been caught for a small amount of Indian hemp in Crete, where he was on vacation, and was given a few years in prison. This Englishman, Pounditch (that was his surname), was a typical type of common Englishman: Short, blond, husky with a thick mustache and white skin. Like a typical Englishman he drank tea all day from a thermos that was refilled every morning. With him I learned to drink tea all the time too. And, also, through the Englishman I had also met an Austrian, who had been caught in Rhodes, I think, and had been sent to the mental hospital, because he was homosexual! Another Ethiopian, joking about his color, said what the Greeks say: "Even if you wash an black man, you waste your soap". From the Austrian I learned the words of his favorite song which he had played for us with a guitar which he had been allowed to have with him: "The House of the Rising Sun".



ΛΕΥΤΕΡΙΑ ΣΤΟΝ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΑ &
ΤΗΝ ΣΟΦΙΑ ΚΥΡΙΤΣΗ

ΚΑΤΩ Η ΚΡΑΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΣΤΟΛΗ

ΤΡΟΜΟΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΔΕΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΣ
ΠΟΥ ΤΟ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ ΧΑΡΑΚΤΗΡΙΖΕΙ ΕΤΣΙ,

ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟ ΙΔΙΟ ΤΟ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ
ΤΡΟΜΟΚΡΑΤΗΣ

"Αν ή ύπορθεση Κυρίτση για την δικασθεόμυνη έχει λήξει, για μας θά λήξει μόνον με την απελευθέρωση του Φύλιππα και της Σοφίας Κυρίτση.

Τη στιγμή που ο αγωνιστής, έργατης και συνδικαλιστής Γ. Σερέφης άθωνεται με τη συμπαράσταση ένδος πλατιερού φάσματος πολιτικών δυνάμεων, μια συνομωσία στωπής έχει έξαπολυθεῖ σχετικά με την σκευωρία σε βάρος την αναρχικών Φύλιππα και Σοφίας Κυρίτση.

Ο Φύλιππας και ή Σοφία Κυρίτση, καταδικασμένοι σε 9 και 5 χρόνια φυλάκιση για κατασκευή, κατασχή και απόκρυψη έκρηκτικών ύλων, κάτι που ποτέ-τόσο στην προδικασία σσο και στό ακροατήριο-δέν αποδείχτηκε βρέσκοντας στένες φυλακές Αίγανας και Κορυδαλλού αντίστοιχα, μετά από μια παραδίνα δίκης σπου διορίζεται ακό τό δικαστήριο συνήγορος τους, ο δικηγόρος τους άνευθυνου συγκαταγορούμενου και ούσιαστικά αντύδικος τους, Παταδοκούλης.

Πιασμένοι δυσ μέρες πρίν τη συζήτηση τού τρομοκρατικού νομοσχέδιοι: στή βουλή, στήν προσπάθεια νά αποδείχτες "πάση θυσία" πώς ύπαρχουν και στήν 'Ελλάδα τρομοκράτες, ο Φύλιππας και ή Σοφία Κυρίτση βρέσκοντας στένες φυλακές από τό Μάρτη του '78 έχοντας κάνει στόν "Αρειο Πάγο αίτηση για την άναυρεση της δίκης τους." Ήδη ό "Αρειος Πάγος δέχτηκε τό αίτημα για άναυρεση και δίρισε νέα δίκη στήν 31 Μαρτίου." Εντωμεταξύ ο δυσ σύντροφοι από τής 18/1/79 έχουν χυρίζει για δευτέρη φορά απεργία πείνας διαμαρτυρόμενοι τσο διό για την σκευωρία σε βάρος τους σσο και για της άθλες συνθήκες διαβίωσής τους στένες φυλακές.

"Αν σήμερα, χαρακτηρίζοντας τρομοκράτες και ρύχνοντας στένες φυλακές ο Φύλιππας και ή Σοφία Κυρίτση-άνθρωποι που πιστεύουν στή συλλογική έπαναστατική βία έναντια στήν τάξη πούχουν έπιβάλλει τά αφεντικά, αυδούς ο καθένας μας θά μπορεί νά βρέσκεται στή δέση τους.

"Η όργανωση της ύπορθεσης στή Φύλιππα και τη Σοφίας είναι ή όργανωση της άμυνάς μας, είναι ύπορθεση όλων δσων ακατούν νά πάρουν τής τύχες τους στά δικά τους χέρια. Η ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΤΕΣ είναι ή έπαναστατική δραστηριότητα κου μιλά για διάλει της άλλες.

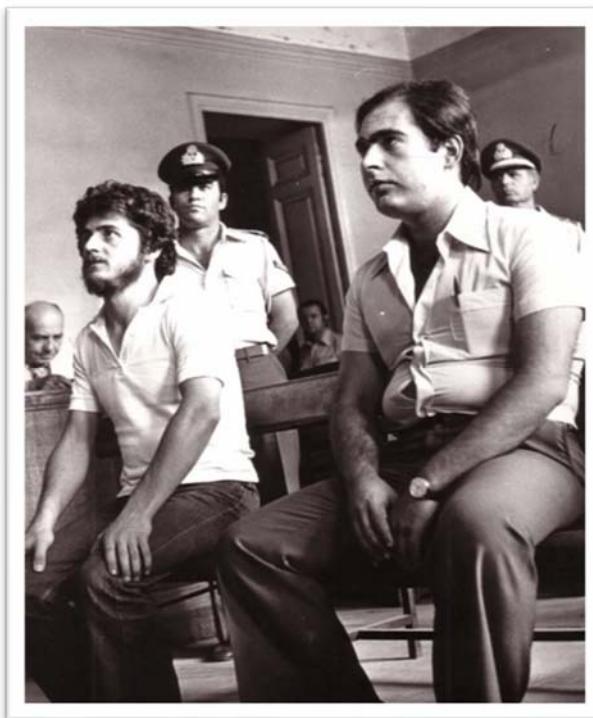
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ΓΙΑ ΜΙΑ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΑΦΕΝΤΙΚΑ, ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΦΥΛΑΚΕΣ

ΥΠΟΘΕΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΚΥΡΙΤΣΗ

The announcement that went out about my second hunger strike

I didn't meet only them when I ended up in a cell. I also met two great personalities who played an important role not only in my own life but also in

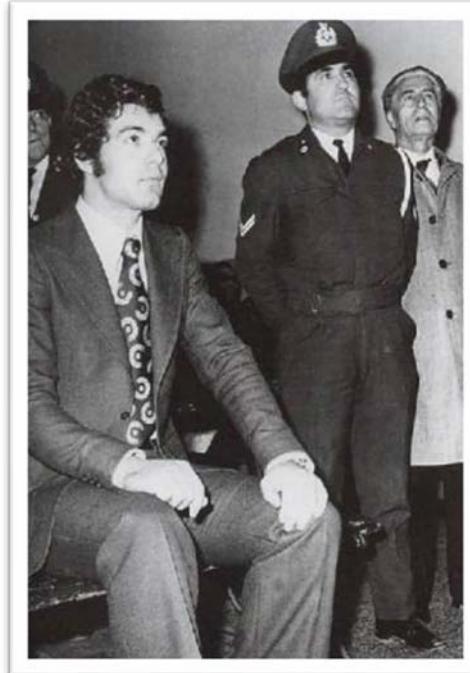
The movement for the human rights of prisoners, personalities who wrote history: Giannis Scandalis and Giannis Petropoulos. At that time, they lived in the same cell, on the bedside table of which there was a framed portrait of the German urban guerrilla Ulrike Meinhof, who had committed "suicide" in prison in 1976.



On the left, Giannis Scandalis in his court at the time I met him and besides his fellow defendant Mathioudakis who was acquitted of the charges

I had met Scandalis in court, when we were being tried, because he too, after all, was tried after us from the same judges. He was the first prisoner for political reasons to be sentenced under the then new anti-terrorist law 774/77, which was brought to the Parliament by the Minister of Justice Stamatis on the day they carried out the pogrom against the anarchists and they had caught me and Sophia. He had been given 5 years in prison for some bombs planted by his organization, the Neutral Hellenic Front, whose leader, Dr. Vassilis Tsironis, had been "suicided" or killed himself when the anti-terrorist police raided his home on July 10, 1978. Scandalis was caught the same day on a bus in Syntagma. He had told me that in the Security Police they had put a policeman in his cell to guard him, and because he had started a hunger strike there, they had taken him straight to the prisoners' psychiatric hospital, to the four-point restraint cells, where he had been kept for several days. From the psychiatric hospital he had been sent to the disciplinary prison of Corfu, where he had gone on hunger strike and after ten days they had

sent him back. During the strike they had him in the disciplinary cells and beat him. From the psychiatric hospital, after some time, he was sent back to Corfu, where he went on strike again and was beaten again. After ten days of strike he was sent back again. And this violin had been repeated several times. Petropoulos was a lifer who had killed, together with another, a man of the night who was clinging to his mother. He had been in for several years and had managed to escape and go to Holland, where after some time he was caught and sent back. While in Dutch prisons he had met members of the Red Army Faction held there and admired their militancy. Hence his admiration for Meinhof, whose portrait had framed and had on his bedside table.



Theodoros Venardos in one of his trials

I don't remember when it was, if it was this time or another time that I ended up in the psychiatric hospital for prisoners, when I met the famous "bandit with the gladioli", Theodoros Venardos. During the dictatorship, Venardos had done some bank robberies, one of which he had done by hiding the robbery weapon inside a bouquet of gladiolus flowers and from those he got his nickname. He had also made a spectacular escape from Korydallos but had not managed to stay out for long. Because of his abilities and for vindictive reasons, since he was very popular, he had been sent to the disciplinary prison of Corfu at the time when tortures were in use there (1976-1978). To get out of there like a psychopath he had been forced to drink his own urine and to eat its feces, as he told me once. He was a very tall

husky young man, very handsome and always smartly dressed. I met him when he approached me to ask me something about my watch, probably whether it was genuine or a monkey, and then he asked me to read something. I had given him John Reed's *Insurgent Mexico*. From him I had heard that Scandalis was the most tortured prisoner in the Greek prisons. Apparently, he was referring to the beatings Scandalis suffered every time he was sent to Corfu and went on hunger strike.

Another inmate of the Prisoners' Psychiatric Hospital of Korydallos whose brother I happened to meet in Aegina, when he too had been brought from the disciplinary prison of Corfu, was Valatos. He was a young man of average height with long black hair. He spent all the time when the cells and wards were open, pacing up and down the corridor without speaking to anyone. It wasn't long after I was seeing him going up and down, and I learned that he had killed himself.

The beginning of my joint struggle with Giannis Scandalis

It goes without saying who I hung out with the most. It was natural to do it with the only prisoner for political reasons who was in the psychiatric prison, Giannis Scandalis. Giannis was a child of political refugees from the 1946-1949 civil war and was born and raised in Poland. From Poland, where he had studied as a Civil Engineer, he had left around the age of 25 and traveled around Western Europe a bit, until he ended up in Greece in 1978 and within less than two months he joined the Neutral Greek Front of Tsironis. He had not even been in Greece six months when he was caught and therefore, he was not comfortable in Greek, which he spoke with a Polish accent. He was relatively short and thin and exuded an aristocratic air. He seemed an easy target for the beasts who worked as prison guards, and so they amused themselves by beating him. But Giannis was never afraid of them and always fought for his rights. No matter how many times they had taken him to Corfu and beaten him, they had not managed to keep him there. I, hearing about his martyrdom, was dumbfounded. I could not imagine that a prisoner for political reasons is tortured like this in Greek prisons and outside no one talks about him, as if he does not exist and as if he never existed. So, I decided to react to this by connecting the support they showed to me and Sophia from the outside, with him. I decided, i.e., at the first opportunity, to send a message outside, where I would ask anyone who supports me and Sophia to also support Giannis Scandalis. That time, while I was in the psychiatric hospital, i.e. a couple of months, I played chess with Giannis, as did Petropoulos, with whom I had also played, if I remember correctly. In general, living in the same cell with Pounditch and hanging out with Scandalis and Petropoulos, I had a better time than in Aegina, where I was kept in a ward. It was easier for my relatives to visit me in

Korydallos, from making the whole trip from Piraeus by boat to come to Aegina to see me. Before they sent me back, they had sent back Pounditch, who, before being expelled, using a Chinese method called "I Chig" had predicted that something bad would happen to him. Since then I have never seen or heard from him again.

My third hunger strike - In the confinement of the Prisoners' mental hospital

Unfortunately I didn't stay long in the mental hospital. After a month and a few days, they returned me to the prison of Aegina, without having managed to visit Sophia. Seeing that I was not counted in the slightest, by not being given a visit with Sophia even when I was kept in the psychiatric ward of prisoners which is in the same building complex as the Korydallos Women's Prison, where Sophia was kept, I decided to go on hunger strike again, only a few weeks after my second strike. I started on March 16, 1979.

After five days in the disciplinary cell, I was again sent to the prisoners' psychiatric hospital. But this time I was not taken to a ward or a cell. They took me to the basement, to the four-point restraint cells. They put me in blue woolen pajamas and chained me on all fours to a bed frame bolted to the floor. They had patches on the chains where the iron touched the skin. They told me that they had orders to keep me in detention until I stopped my hunger strike. The detention cells had a Turkish toilet, which you were untied to go to once a day. The rest of the time you were chained on your back. If you wanted to go to the bathroom, you had to hold yourself or do it on yourself. Of course I wasn't the only one tied up in the four-point restraint cells. There was at least one other, a young man I knew. He was shouting and saying various things about the narco-trafficking in the mental hospital and I was hearing him. He was also calling the guard but he was not paying attention. I guess I was tied up in the four-point restraint cells with the excuse that one has to be a psychopath to go on a hunger strike in prison. They, however, were clear to me: Either you stop the hunger strike or we keep you tied up. And I, with the stubbornness that characterizes me, decided to continue to show them that I am not afraid of them. So I spent two or three days tied on that bed and pondering whether it was worth continuing tied and forgotten in a basement, since I didn't expect immediate results. The four-point restraint is something that, when it goes on too long, becomes excruciating and I saw no gain in striking restraint in the above manner, since a hunger strike to be effective must last many days. It wasn't worth spending many days or months in the four-point restraint cells and that's why, after two or three days, I decided to stop. After the strike was

stopped, Papanastasiou, the psychiatrist who had restrained me, sent me to a ward. John Petropoulos, having learned that I was in the psychiatric hospital, helped carry me to a ward, where they sent me, a bed and my suitcase which had a lot of books and was therefore quite heavy.

The ward of the Korydallos Prisoners' Psychiatric Hospital where I ended up will remain unforgettable to me, because the people I met there had real problems that fall within the realm of psychiatry. The first I remember was a speechless inmate who was all day lying in bed and completely covered with the military blanket provided by the psychiatric hospital. Because he was quite petite and thin, when I entered the ward, I did not realize that there was a person under the blanket of his bed and I went and sat on the blanket. Then he moved and that's how I knew there was a person under the blanket! Another young prisoner with a Muslim name had drunk a bottle of oil, thinking he would kill himself, and for that he had been locked up for a whole month! A third, Mahmoud, would occasionally try to kill himself by plugging his nostrils with cotton and closing his mouth tightly. A fourth, P., a very tall and husky man who was in company with the prisoner Axypolitos, with whom we had been tried from the same court, and at that time he was in the mental hospital, used to masturbate under the blanket and accompany the masturbation with descriptions of the love affair he created with his imagination. He was very annoying to me because even though he was talking to himself during his masturbation, he was talking quite loudly, as if everyone in the ward was obliged to hear him. However, my favorite was one, who, hearing me laugh as I read the book The Good Soldier Schweik (an adaptation of it that did not include the whole book) in my bed, laughed from his own bed. And because I laughed often, he kept being carried away and was laughing too!

The first support concert for us that took place at the Sporting stadium

I had arrived at the psychiatric hospital on the eve of the hearing at the Supreme Court of the appeal of my trial, which my father had assigned to the lawyer Evangelos Yiannopoulos, who was then president of the Athens Bar Association. Yannopoulos was Scandalis' lawyer at the court, where he was sentenced to five years imprisonment, and surprisingly, after the decision, he had said to Giannis: "We did well"! Ever since the court, he had had no contact with Giannis and had done nothing to stop the tortures. This had irritated me greatly and that is why, before the hearing of my case at the Areopagus, I sent him a letter in which I lashed out at him with derogatory terms. When he read it he became furious with me and my father had a difficult time to persuade him not to drop the case. He didn't drop it by acknowledging to me the right to be indignant against the prison, but I think he did it more for the 20,000 drachmas that my father had given him, a very big sum not negligible at that time when the daily construction wage was around 300 drachmas. I, at that time, did not expect the lawyers to get us out of prison,

because I knew that our case was a political one, and therefore only received a political treatment. Fortunately, there were comrades outside who were earnestly striving to support us, although I was not informed of them and their actions.

These comrades, therefore, thought that the best support for us would be a big concert, which would widely publicize the matter and show our strength. So they decided to do a concert with big names of the music industry at the "Sporting" indoor stadium, in Agios Eleftherios Acharnon. For this concert, as I learned later from my comrade Stavroula Lagadinou, who was one of the main organizers, 50,000 drachmas had also been given by the well-known composer of rebetika and folk songs, Vassilis Tsitsanis. I had heard from my father that my father knew him from Trikala, because they lived in the same neighborhood. But they had no relations. Before the concert, I sent out a text, where I said that I do not want support from those who do not support Scandalis. I had also asked that it be known that I would consider those who went to spoil the concert to be scumbags. I did this because the previous concert that had been held for anarchist prisoners in the same venue, about fifteen months ago, had been spoiled by some fanatical anarchists.

The concert, after all, was very well prepared and supported by a wide range of sympathizers, such as the well-known "Eleftherotypia" journalist Giorgos Votsis who, before the concert, published a long article about our case entitled: "Who will judge the judges?". The article was published as part of a series of articles he wrote, one every week, with the general title: "On a black background." After our release, he published these articles, or a large part of them, in a book with the same title. But his article about us was absent and I think it was intentionally absent. However, the article was not written about the concert, but it highlighted our case at the center of the news. As a result of the publicity that was given and the big names that offered to sing selflessly at the concert, the stadium was filled to the brim and many people stayed outside. A rough estimate of the crowd inside and outside, according to the organizer I mentioned earlier, puts it at no less than 10,000. Among the organizers were the "big heads" of our milieu: Christos Konstantinidis and Nikos Balis, as well as Kyriakos Mazokopos, who later suffered multiple injuries from a bomb explosion in his hands that amputated him. Giannis Serifis was also in the audience. Among the singers, the most famous was Dionysis Savopoulos, who sang there his new song, inspired by the story of Corfu lifer Nikos Koemtzis: "Long zeibekiko for Nikos". Our friend anti-authoritarian songwriter Nikolas Asimos also sang. Be that as it may, the attempt to break up the concert, as the previous one had been broken up, was made, but the guard was prepared and prevented it. The episodes, however, after the end of the concert were not missing. Perhaps those who could not break up the concert starred in the smashing spree

that followed its end. Banks and shops that usually provoke the anger of anarchists were broken in great numbers, the police attacked, some people were caught and some were taken to court, as a result of which three of them received some years sentence. One of them was the Architecture student Giorgos Yokaris, whose mother and grandfather I happened to meet in the village where I spent my holidays in Crete in the past.



Sporting's indoor stadium in Ag. Eleftherio Acharnon packed with people who came to support us and listen to big names in the artistic world, such as D. Savopoulos seen on far left in white shirt and suspenders.



Another picture from the concert. In the center, with the long beard, the founder of "International Library" Christos Konstantinidis



Another photo from the concert. Giannis Serfis and the journalist George Votsis

The appeal of the trial was rejected by the Supreme Court, although this trial was a model of malpractice. After all, Areios Pagos was not famous for its democracy and reliability. In the past, the first prime minister of the dictatorship of the colonels was the then president of Areios Pagos Kollias. In addition, in order not to prosecute those who participated in the governments appointed by the dictators, the Supreme Court had ruled that the seven-year dictatorship was an instant offense! As for our lawyer Yiannopoulos, from what my brother had told me, he was confusing our case with another, showing that he had not dealt with ours case file at all. I did not hope for the Areios Pagos after what my eyes had seen, and therefore I do not remember being saddened by the rejection of the appeal. What kept me sad was that I didn't see Sophia and I didn't know when I would see her again. The hunger strikes I had done had not brought the desired result but I did not give up. Not even a month has passed since the appeal was rejected and I found another reason to strike.

My fourth hunger strike : Abuse and force feeding

I had been sent back to Aegina from the psychiatric hospital for prisoners, where I was having a good time working out every day with Petropoulos and even playing volleyball (where before I left for Aegina I also sprained my leg). There I found Giorgos Yokaris, one of the three protesters who were sentenced to 3 and a half years in prison for the incidents after the concert that took place for us in Sporting. I met him in the corridors between the wings, having left the wing to go to the accounting office. He told me they had him on the second wing. Then I considered it my duty to demand that we be put together, since the man was inside because he supported me. They didn't put us together at all, even though I told them that the members of the military junta were together, and that's why I told them that I'm going on a hunger strike with this demand in addition to the previous ones. So the next day, April 26, 1979, I found myself in the disciplinary cell again. In fact, I had managed to have a masterpiece book with me to read, "Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage des jeunes generations" by Vaneigem, which had been published in Greek under the title "The Revolution of the Every Day Life". But this time things turned out worse than any other time: On the seventh day of the strike, 2-5-1979 in the afternoon, from the disciplinary cell, where I had been locked up for those 7 days, they took me to the infirmary and told me that if I don't break the strike, they will force-feed me with serum. When I protested and told them that such a thing is illegal without the relevant order from the Ministry or the competent Prosecutor, doctor Rekleitis, in front of the chief constable H. Tomazidis and the deputy chief constable Deligiannis, slapped me in the face throwing my glasses and said: damn it you won't make a serum". Then the guards, struggling with me, led me away

on the bed, they tied my hands on the bed with handcuffs and my legs with gauze, and holding me by the hair, hands and feet, many of them, gave me serum, breaking the vein, as the hospital microbiologist told me later. The next day they did the same to me and while I was tied up, abused and with the serum needle in my hand, the director of the prison came and told me that this was how he would "punish" me and even worse until I stopped the strike. When I asked him to contact my relatives or at least my lawyers, he told me that, not only will he not allow me any contact until I stop the strike, but the next day he will "feed me out of my ass", which is more painful, and it will spoil me. And that he will also be in front to admire his achievement. His language enraged me, and risking being beaten, tied as I was, I said to him: "You will fart my balls" Luckily they didn't beat me.

Indeed, the next day, Friday 4-5-1979 in the afternoon, doctor Rekleitis sent the guards and they brought me to him and while they were holding me, he gave me an enema despite my strong protests. The next day, Saturday 5-5-1979, the other doctor of the prison of Aegina tried to give me an enema again in the morning but after a persistent struggle and after I complained that, all night in the discipline cell, my belly hurt, I was sent back to the discipline cell after they had already ripped my pants. Finally, the same doctor gave me an enema in the afternoon, again having a guard do it for me.

Against this unusually brutal and torturous treatment I decided to react with a thirst strike. I had never done a thirst strike before and I thought it was easier than it turned out to be. The thirst strike is terribly torturous and that is how it is explained that the person dies if it continues after a week or so days. I kept it from Saturday afternoon until the afternoon of Monday 7-5-79, when I was again taken from the disciplinary cell to the infirmary and, under the orders of Dr. Rekleitis, they again gave me an enema. This doctor repeatedly threatened to make me "black from beating". I didn't see any point in the thirst strike since they were pouring fluids from my anus so after that enema I stopped the thirst strike and only continued the hunger strike. Finally, on Tuesday 8-5-1979 and under the pressure of the continuous deterioration of my health, I was sent to the prisoners' hospital of Korydallos, after 13 days of hunger strike and forced feeding. From the prisoner hospital I sent my lawyer Eleni Dimoulea a letter with all these details of my abuse, so that she could file lawsuits against the director of the prison Kostaras and the doctors. But this letter never reached its destination, because it was intercepted by the hospital management. On the other hand, Eleni "disappeared" in the following period, so I did not have the opportunity to ask her what she did with the lawsuits.

The summer of 1979 in the prison of Aegina:

The worst summer of my life

I was not kept long in the prison hospital. So in the summer of 1979 I was back in the prison of Aegina. This summer must have been the worst of my life. After so many adventures and attempts to join Korydallos to see Sophia, I was back again without having achieved anything and even the situation in my ward had changed for the worse. Kurt the German had gone and in his place had come a tall black American, a soldier at one of the American bases in Greece, who all he did all day was eat a huge variety of food that was brought to him and read paperback books with pornographic content. Fortunately, he sometimes offered some of his food to the two other blacks in the ward who were from Ghana. He didn't stay long anyway. When he left, they brought in his place the friend of Kimon Emmanuelides, Kostagogos who seemed suspicious to me. It was the first time that a Greek other than me had been brought into the foreigners' ward, and he had been placed next to my and Christian's beds, a position from which he could hear what we were saying. We spoke English but who knows if he didn't know English too. Then they brought another Greek. A guy in some old clothes, who had nothing with him and didn't talk to anyone. Much of the day he used to spend planning something. He would come to me as I was lying down, shake my leg and say: "Grab a cigarette." But quickly he stopped saying that too and would just come and shake my leg. One day, as I was passing by his bed, he asked me something nonsensical, namely: "Where is the nearest airport"? When I answered him, he said something else that seemed absurd to me. Also seeing that I was talking to him he showed me the intricate design he was drawing and told me that this will be his house! He didn't bother anyone and in the afternoons, when the others were playing football in the yard, he would throw a ball at the wall and catch it again when it gelled. Sometimes it eluded him and rolled between the legs of those playing ball and he too ran to catch it between their legs. He paid no attention to their voices. But one day he didn't "get it clean": Someone reported him for never taking a bath, and that's why the guards came to take him away by force. He couldn't avoid the bath, no matter how much he protested. It was obvious from a hundred kilometers away that he was lost in his own world and yet the guards managed to abuse him sometime. In particular, he thought that his sentence had ended and yet he was being held. That's why one day, when they were locking us in the cell for lunch, he asked them to release him. They told him that when he was due to be released, they would release him, and he replied, "You can't do whatever you want with a flashlight." That was enough for him to be taken and locked up in the disciplinary cell. For the discipline cell, I saw the guards taking also Kimon who he had been brought to the fourth wing too. He was asking for the door of the radius to be opened for him

to go to some work. Accounting department; Headquarters? I do not know. Because they refused him he started telling them that they were Nazis and was giving the Nazi salute by shouting: "Heil Hitler". He also ended up in the disciplinary wing. But Christian also began to have a problem with a new warden, Dua, who was said to have also worked in the disciplinary prison of Corfu, proof that he was dangerous. He came to our yard one afternoon, saw the mohawk-style braid that Christian had left on his head after shaving off all the hair, and pulled it at him, demanding that he cut it. I don't remember what Christian had done in the end.

The impressive figure of the lone bank robber Theodoros Venardos

One fine day that summer, in the prison of Aegina, and even to our wing, they brought the famous "bandit with the gladioli", Theodoros Venardos. Tall, handsome, dressed in a fine costume, with a briefcase like a senior employee of a multinational company, he did not fit in at all with the environment that, to a certain extent, looked like a gypsy camp. And as if they did it on purpose, they had put him in ward 4, where they kept some old village murderers, rapists, convicts for incest, etc. He didn't talk to anyone. He was sitting on the bench in front of his room with his briefcase and was constantly studying his documents. Not many days had passed since he had come and at some stage when I was passing in front of him, he called me to sit next to him and told me that he did not want to stay any longer in this prison and especially in that ward, for the reasons that I mentioned earlier. So he was asking me how he could leave for the hospital or the psychiatric hospital, from where he had been brought. I told him that the only way I knew was a hunger strike, but that included the possibility of being "force-fed", as they called it, but in essence it was a milk enema. He told me that he had no intention of being subjected to such humiliation and therefore I would have to get him some wire to sew his mouth shut. When I asked him how he would bear the pain, he replied that he would sew his teeth and not his lips. I told him that I didn't have the means to find wire but I would tell an Austrian friend of mine who might be able to. I did tell Christian about the wire but he insisted on knowing what I wanted it for. I don't remember if I told him, but he didn't bring me. When I told Venardos the next day that my friend wasn't bringing me wire, he asked me if my friend was Christian who worked in the garbage. When I said yes, he told me that it was a good thing he didn't bring wire to us, because he suspected him of being a stool pigeon, because three years ago people had been moved from Korydallos to Corfu and it was said that Christian was responsible for it. I told him, however, that I had the best impressions from Christian. Anyway, Venardos finally left the Aegina's prison

the next day by swallowing a big nail in front of the guards. The result was to be sent back to Korydallos, to the hospital.

A prank that cost 20 buckets of water to carry

Perhaps the only good memory I have from that summer is a prank we played together with the underage, Spyridis, on the other underage and "best friend", Kostas Kypraios. In particular, Kypraios used to call me "encyclopedia" or "Domi" (from the encyclopedia "Domi"), because of my knowledge on various subjects that seemed to him to be many. Spyridis learned that the capital of the Netherlands is not Amsterdam, as I thought, but The Hague. Which I found out, because I had, among other books, a world almanac. So he told me that he would make a bet with Kypraios that the capital of Netherlands was The Hague and whoever lost would carry 20 buckets of water from the taps to their ward, which was on the opposite side of the courtyard. To find out who is right, he would send Kypraios, before the bet was made, to ask me. I would have to say that the capital of the Netherlands was Amsterdam. Then Kypraios would place the bet and they would then come to look at the Almanac. So it happened. Kypraios lost and messed with me. I told him that I am not an encyclopedia and he wrongly called me an encyclopedia for so long. Anyway, Kypraios started carrying the buckets of water and Spyridis, seeing him from the window of my room, was laughing. I don't know what happened to Spyridis in his life. But I know that Kypraios, at the age of about 30, and after I had seen him once outside, working in a clothing store in Panepistimiou street, was fatally stabbed by his brother, in their parental home, at a village, near Livadeia I think. His brother claimed that Kypraios had come to extort drug money from their father.

The tortured Giorgos Apostolopoulos who was driven to madness

One day George (I think) Apostolopoulos was brought to our ward. A short dark-haired man who I later learned was a gypsy. I had heard about him that he was one of the few, four or five in number, prisoners who were inhumanely tortured in the disciplinary prison of Corfu and he did not budge. When they beat him, he would shout at them to tease them: "Beat me even more, hey, I get horny". It was rumored that he had gone mad from the many tortures. His bed was placed next to Kostagogos. Apostolopoulos, learning the reasons I was in and that I was an anarchist, had approached me and liked to hang out with me. But after a certain point he began to talk a lot with Kostagogos, and after a short time, for the slightest reason, Kostagogos would shout at him, as if he knew that his nerves

Were stretched and wanted to break them. As it happened. One fine day, Apostolopoulos relapsed and started talking to himself saying unintelligible things and drinking water from dirty glasses that had been left for washing in the ward sink. Finally, he was taken from the ward. Before he lost his mind again, Apostolopoulos had told me to always remember something: To be careful and stay away from Koutselas. At that time, I did not know Koutselas at all. I believe that Kostagogos knew the story of Apostolopoulos and was deliberately shouted to him, to get on his nerves. That's why I mentioned above that his behavior raised questions and I found him suspicious.

The unnecessary destruction of a work of art

In the prison of Aegina there were not frequent searches of the cells, as in other prisons. Since I had been brought there, about a year and a half ago, I had not been searched. But one "bad" day, early this autumn, several guards appeared in the wing and entered our wards, turning them upside down. The ugliest of them, and perhaps the most evil, found on the wall above my bed a huge collage I had made of clippings from German magazines, which had come to Christian from the Austrian embassy. It had taken me months to make this collage and it had excellent photographs, black and white and colored, even one of parents who had eaten their children, in the great famine that had struck Russia during its civil war (1917-1921). It was a couple behind a table, on which were pieces of human bodies. The ugly guard tore this excellent collage to pieces, without saying a word to me. Since then I have never made a photo collage again in my life.

A positive event from that summer was the release of my humorist friend Spyros Kotretos. I have never said goodbye to a departing person with such joy as I said goodbye to Kotretos. And although I had to spend another seven years in prison, we parted and kissed with the promise of getting out soon. Unfortunately, the next time I saw him again was in Korydallos prisons. He had quickly fallen back in. The truth is, while I was happy with Kotretos' release, I missed his company, because he had a sense of humor and with his humor our life in prison was less painful.

The "sedition" in the second ray, the tortures that followed and my fifth hunger strike

This summer Tsouvalakis Thodoros was not in the prisons of Aegina. He had been taken to court, he "received" a sentence of 7 years in prison, he and his brother 14 and ended up in Chalkida prisons. But before the summer ended, he was brought to Aegina but they did not allow him to come to the fourth ray, where I was. They

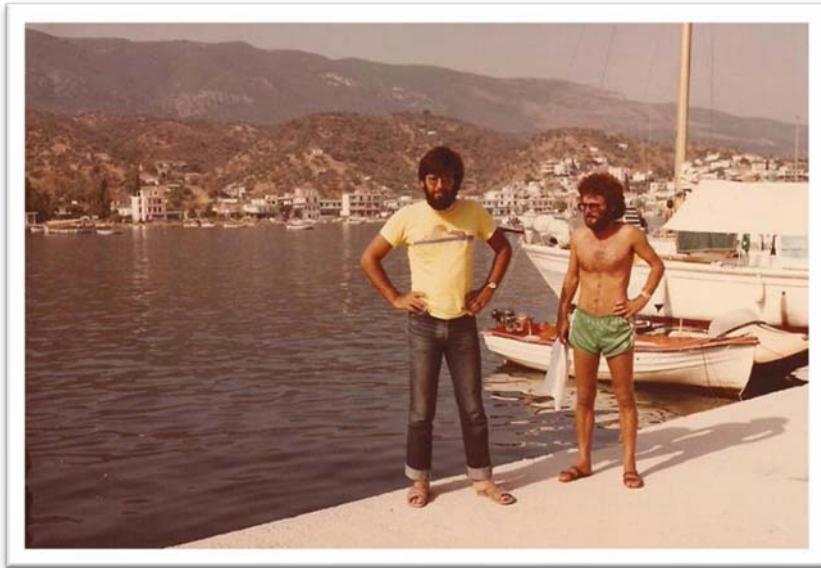
put him in the second one, where Yokaris was, and after a while they also brought my "closest" prisoner for political reasons: Giannis Scandalis. At that time, I was not allowed to leave the wing without a guard following me. So I didn't see the other prisoners for political reasons, nor Tsouvalakis at all. Only from Christian, who like a "garbage collector" entered the other wings, I learned about their existence. I had learned that all my friends had managed to find themselves in the same ward. But I had not learned what they were preparing together with other prisoners of the ward. Until one afternoon I learned that they had revolted and that they had been locked up in the disciplinary cells and beaten badly. Not knowing what else to do, I prepared a report for the prosecutor and declared to the guards that I was going on a hunger strike in support of my fellow prisoners for political reasons. In the evening I was also in the disciplinary cell. I didn't know exactly what had happened before I was locked up in the disciplinary cell. While I was there, the disciplinary cells were as quiet as a graveyard. Only the other day in the morning I heard screams and clatters that ended barbells being pulled. They opened the cells one by one and took the "rebels" for transfer. My heart was beating like crazy with my fear but eventually the noise stopped and I was still in my cell. Afterwards, when I met again with Giannis Scandalis, I learned that from Aegina, he and the other "rebels", had been taken that day to the disciplinary prison of Corfu.

After five days in the disciplinary cell I was sent, without torture this time, to the Korydallos prison hospital, where I continued the hunger strike that I had started on August 19th until September 17th. After five days from the day I was transferred to the hospital, they brought to my ward Giannis Scandalis, who until then was in Corfu and was on a hunger strike. I don't remember welcoming another person in my life as warmly as I welcomed Giannis that day. I am not an outgoing person by nature. And yet, when Scandalis entered my hospital room, with head shaved by the Corfu guards and bearing still fresh scars from his beatings in Aegina and Corfu, I hugged and kissed him. It was a return from hell and I had not seen him since I was transferred and "force-fed" in Aegina. The fact that we had survived such extreme situations was a reason for us to be very happy indeed. We did not think about what we had to face in the future, with such heavy punishments that we had and so much hatred of the guards that we had gathered on us. It was enough for us that we had temporarily escaped from hell and were together. Something for which we had fought for so many months and under such adverse conditions. Anyway, that day I learned from Giannis Scandalis, that in Aegina he had been beaten more than any other time in his life, as he characteristically told me. He had been beaten other times, since every time he was taken to Corfu and went on a hunger strike for ten days, until he was sent back again, he was beaten. He also had experienced the disciplinary cells of the prisoners' mental hospital,

where he had been sent directly from the Security Police after his arrest, because he was on hunger strike. But he had never been beaten so much as in Aegina. They had tied him to the "cross", i.e. to the two rings facing each other on the walls of the discipline cell, and were beating him until he fainted. When he fainted, the doctor Rekleitis would come to check if he could take more beatings, they would pour him a bucket of water to recover from the fainting, and they would continue beating until he fainted again. In fact, the next day, as they were lifting him up for the transfer, he had been beaten so much that he was afraid they would kill him. The guards were beating him and shouting at him that with what he was doing he would close the prison and they would be left without bread. For the sake of history, I mention that, four years later, the prison of Aegina, which was an orphanage before, 155 years since it was built, and had housed thousands of sentenced to death (being a place of executions), was closed for ever!

I also learned that, after him, the one mostly beaten had been Theodoros Tsouvalakis. When the guards beat him, he would say to them: "Why are you beating me, gentlemen? What have I done to you?" As for Yokaris, who was in prison because of his support for me, Sophia and Giannis, he stayed in the disciplinary prison of Corfu. Finally, about how things had gotten to this point,

Giannis had told me that a good lad from their ward who had a university education but was in prison because he had killed his wife, working in the prison canteen had learned a lot about schemes of the guards who made them rich illegally and he had made a study, where he showed what the prisoners were entitled to, under the law, and what finally, after the embezzlement of the guards, ended up with them. Based on this study, a prisoner of the common law in their cell, Panagiotis Georgiadis, had prepared a public complaint, which they would read in the wings yard to rouse the prisoners. Because Georgiadis had appeared suspicious to them for his rebelliousness, it was decided that he should read the complaint in the courtyard of the wing. So, one noon before 12 o'clock, when the wards were closed, Georgiadis went up to an elevated area of the yard and read the complaint. But apart from the complaint, he also started hurling abuses at the guards. The guards did nothing until they locked all the prisoners, and the "rebels", in their cells for lunch. After closing all the cells, many guards gathered, reopened the cell of the "rebels" and led them to the disciplinary cells. That's where the fierce beatings took place, at least for Scandalis and Tsouvalakis. The rest got only some slaps and Georgiadis probably got away with it.



Me and Tsouvalakis in Aegina after our release and after the closing of the prison, which the guards were afraid of, and that's why they had run wild during the insurgency of August 1979

Return to Aegina – Christian Schluder's suicide attempt – My sixth hunger strike

I don't remember how long I stayed in the prisoners' hospital with Scandalis. I must not have stayed long. I remember, however, that not only did I not manage to make a visit with Sophia, but one day the lawyer Dimitris Oikonomou came and told me that he had seen Sophia and found her to be very bad from the psychotropic drugs they were giving her. She looked like she had been drugged. This for me was a "stab" in the heart. It's not enough that they had taken my wife away three months after our marriage and they demanded that I see her again after five years, when her sentence would have ended, but they had also set out to make her a plant. After what I heard, I was sitting on hot coals racking my brain over how to deal with this.

I was in this psychological state when I returned to Aegina. Another unpleasant surprise awaited me there: One day Christian did not get out of bed at all. His bed was in a corner and rested, with its top and one side, against the wall. Christian had spent the whole day turned to the wall. I asked him what was wrong and he replied that he was a little sick. The next day the same. On the evening of the second day, as we were locked in the cell and the inmates of the cell were settling down to sleep, I began to hear from Christian's side something dripping. Since the noise was coming from under his bed I bent down to see what was going on and

I noticed that what was dripping on a rolled sheet under the bed was blood! Christian had cut the vein in his arm at the wrist and expected to bleed to death. I asked him to stop trying to kill himself and since he wouldn't listen, I threatened him that if he continued, I would be forced to call the guards. With a sigh he got out of bed to go and dress his wound, saying that he is a failure and he failed even in killing himself. Shortly after dressing his wound, he went to the little window of the ward door and called out to the guards. When they came, he told them that he had attempted suicide and could not stay in the ward any longer. So, they took him to the disciplinary cell. From what I learned much later, when he was being taken to the discipline cell, he had a razor with him to cut his veins unnoticed in the discipline cell. He hoped that by the time he was transferred, he would be dead. But before they locked him up in the disciplinary cell, they gave him a thorough body search, found his razor and took it away from him. The next day he was sent to the psychiatric hospital for Korydallos prisoners. The other day I collected the bloody sheet and took it to wash it in the troughs that were in the room with the toilets and bathrooms, for the prisoners to wash their clothes. I remember my underage friend, Spyridis, who, having learned of Christian's suicide attempt and seeing me take the sheet to be washed, came up with the idea of spreading the bloody sheet in the yard, for the prisoners and guards to see. I didn't listen to him, because I didn't feel like new fuss.

No more than 15 days passed and Christian was back again. He told me that at the psychiatric hospital, as soon as he arrived, he had been tied up in the basement, and there, tied up, he had been beaten by a guard who said he knew me. This made me realize that my friendship with Christian and the role of "postman" between me, Scandalis and Tsouvalakis that he had played before they were sent to Corfu, had not gone unnoticed. And that was why Warden Duas had insulted him by pulling his pigtail in front of the other prisoners. However, I can say that from a psychological point of view, Christian was much better, compared to the time before he went to the mental hospital. The bad thing, though, was that it wasn't me, because I was thinking about Sophia's crap. The ill-fated Christian did his best to cheer me up, but I continued to sit on "hot coals". Until one day, on the 23rd of November, I announced to him that I would go on hunger strike again, until they allowed me to see Sophia, and I would ask that they stop the pills they were giving her to make her a plant. This development did not sit well with Christian, who had hoped that I would sit with him in Aegina to help him through this difficult phase of his life. I had told him, upon this, that I would gladly stay in Aegina, since he was my best friend among the prisoners of the common penal law, and I understood how bad it must have been, for him to attempt suicide. But in order to do that, I had to leave Sophia to her own destiny. And something like that, I told him, I couldn't do, because Sophia was in prison for her struggles in the movement and for that, since I was faced with the dilemma of who to side with,

I was bound to choose Sophia, no matter how much it cost him and me. So, that afternoon, I dropped a telegram in the mailbox for the prosecutor of the execution of sentences, saying that I was starting a hunger strike the next day. But in vain I expected them to come and take me the next day for the disciplinary cell. They let me go on a hunger strike, for the first time in the ward, not caring that this way they couldn't control whether I was eating or not. Of course, they found out what I was doing from the roommates. This hunger strike that Christian saw me doing was a mental torture for him that he could not endure. He told me that he would go to the disciplinary cell by himself, he said goodbye to me saying that if I got out of this process alive, I would be very strong for the rest of my life, he called the guards and was locked in the disciplinary cell. After five days of hunger strike I was sent to the prisoners' hospital of Korydallos.

There I continued the hunger strike and I was lucky enough to have Giannis Scandalis brought from Corfu, where they had sent him again and he had gone on hunger strike again, having been beaten again. I don't remember if it was this time or another, that Giannis had been beaten the most in Corfu. He had been beaten the most when, sometime when they had him in the chief jailer's office and he was being held from right and left by two guards, so that a third could beat him at his convenience, Giannis had kicked down the sound system with which the guards forced the prisoners to jump out of their beds in the morning by putting the radio on its loudest. I think he had damaged it with his kick, so the guards then beat him the most. Anyway, the good thing this time was that we got together again and that he stayed close to me while the strike continued, which this time lasted longer than any other time. I was so outraged at the psychiatric annihilation they had in store for Sophia that I sat down and wrote a report to the relevant prosecuting attorney, so aggressive and abusive that he could take me to court for it. I calculated that a lot of people would come to hear me in court and I would be given the opportunity to denounce the judges about the bad things they had done to us until then. I also gave a copy of this report to the lawyer who had come to the investigator and then continued to see me from time to time, Katerina Iatropoulou. She had the brilliant idea to make the report a proclamation and thus make our milieu to protest. Which wasn't the best, since I didn't like a lot of people getting to know Sophia's personal information. Sophia, at that time, was sending me messages demanding that I stop the strike that was dragging on, saying that by going on strike, I was doing her the greatest harm. But I didn't give up, even though it had been a month since I started the strike and that's why things had become difficult. I told myself that even if I came to the brink of death with the strike, there was no other way to prevent Sophia's extermination. Something, which I could not accept at all.

Christian's suicide and the end of my first long hunger strike

So, being on strike I reached the Christmas of 1979 and the New Year 1980. A few days after New Year's Day, a prisoner friend of mine from Aegina, Stefanos Rachoutis, about whom I have spoken before, was brought to the hospital. He came to the ward where I was with Scandalis and told me that Christian had killed himself on New Year's Eve. He told me that, until he killed himself, he had been locked up alone in a wing, the third, which had been empty until then, and if any prisoner went to see him, as Stefanos did, he would be in trouble. On New Year's Eve 1980, Christian hanged himself. He did not find the courage to face the new decade. I believe that the guards drove Christian to suicide by having him isolated, at the time when two months ago Christian had tried to kill himself and had been sent to the mental hospital for that. They knew that isolation would be Christian's end. This was the sad end of Christian, my best friend in the prison of Aegina. The end of my friend who I could not help in the most critical period of his life, because I was obliged to do something to save Sophia. It is understood that no guard was punished for Christian's death although, as I learned years later, his tragic death had been the subject of Austrian newspapers at the time. Also, besides Christian, another prisoner of our wing had met a tragic death on New Year's Eve: It was Abu Ali Abu Liazid, the Arab who cooked meat in the wing's kitchen. They had taken him, because he was sick, to some hospital, but they refused to keep him. Abu Ali had protested vehemently and the cops had therefore killed him by beating him to death.

With such unpleasant news and not knowing Sophia's condition, since it had been a long time since I saw her, I was seized with a despair that made me not care if I died from the strike, if they were to get Sophia out of the way, as they had done with Christian. I could not imagine my future life with a girl addicted to psychotropic drugs, just because, for reasons of political expediency, they had chosen to present us as dangerous terrorists, when even the charges with which they had convicted us were ridiculous. If we had done something, I could say that I played and lost. But this was pure theater. The revolutionary organizations were active for so many years and no one from them was caught. But us who, even if we accept that the Molotov cocktails were ours, we had done no harm, they treated us as if we had blown up half of Athens. It was a challenge I could never digest. This obvious injustice had made me not participate in the trial that was done against us, this injustice made me feel so suffocated in prison that I did not care if I lost my life from the strike. After all, when you are young and have experienced few beautiful moments in your life, you cannot imagine the beautiful aspects of life, which are worth living for. You despair more easily than a person who has lived long enough and therefore is able to remember many beautiful experiences from life and also

has learned how to make his life beautiful. If you have not known beautiful places, beautiful people and admirable works of science and art, you do not know the beautiful sides of life, which are worth living for. This is how I explain the indifference that young people show in relation to old people towards death and that is why they sacrifice their lives like soldiers for a country or an ideology. They die even making bold displays of their abilities, knowing they might get killed.

For all the above reasons I continued the strike and every day I looked in the newspapers to see if anything was written, to know that I could hope. And indeed something was written. I was lucky enough that my strike coincided with a major unrest in the universities, which had been caused by a new education bill that the government had submitted to Parliament, the later Law 815. The student backlash went as far as university faculties sit-ins. Usually those who take the lead in occupations are also the most politically aware, so they can "listen" to calls for support for imprisoned activists. My anarchist comrades had appealed to them and succeeded in expanding the movement of support for my strike. Until one day, as I had passed the fifty days of hunger strike, I read that a demonstration had been organized by student associations in Propylaia, to demand that my demands be accepted by the Minister of Justice. Before the demonstration took place, and while I was at the 54th day of my hunger strike, the minister announced that he accepted my demands. I had also been informed that Sophia, under the emotional pressure of my strike, had stopped the psychotropic drugs on her own. That was a great achievement though.

After the strike ended, all I cared about was eating. But it is not easy to quickly adapt the body from a state of starvation to a state where you eat anything with bulimia. That's why a doctor at the hospital had taken it upon himself to make me a special diet to restore the balance of my body. Of course, I was so hungry after the strike that I didn't strictly follow the diet the doctor had prescribed. Fortunately, I was young and the body could withstand this kind of abuse. And food is to a hungry man the best reward of his struggle. A fight in which I was not alone. I had Giannis Scandalis on my side, giving me courage and being an example for me to imitate with the determination he had shown in his struggles up to that point.

Three "careless" months in the third wing of Korydallos prison - Kyriakos Moiras and Panagiotis Ganglias

I don't remember how long they kept me in the hospital after the strike ended. But when they expelled me, for the first time they did not take me to Aegina but to Korydallos. They gave me there a cell to live alone. The first cell of the third wing

which was on the ground floor next to where the guards sat and looked out into the yard, i.e. it was a security cell so to speak. Anyway, I didn't have a problem. The cell of Korydallos was day to night compared to the wards of Aegina. There I could exercise whenever I wanted, and we were also allowed small gas cookers, to cook something basic like fried eggs. And in the cell I received visitors of my choice. One of them was Nikos Manetakis. A drug inmate in his forties who looked sixty. He wrote excellent poems but also spoke very well. He was an old friend of Nikos Koemtzis, a death row inmate, who had been convicted of three murders of policemen during a fight in a nightclub, and his sentence had been commuted to life because before he was executed, executions were abolished.

Koemtzis was at that time in Corfu, which was a disciplinary prison. But Manetakis had also been in the prison of Corfu, when the tortures were taking place. But he had not been beaten, because he could write reports to the authorities and the guards did not want their disgrace to be known to the Ministry of Justice. Another prisoner who used to visit me was Lambros Petsis. I don't remember why he was in there, but he had a reputation as a tough prisoner. I had met him when I had gone to the mental hospital. He was in contact with my lawyer Katerina Iatropoulou and from him I learned that Katerina was preparing to publish a magazine with the prisons as exclusive theme. Petsis was preparing an article for the magazine and he told me to write too. I had told him that if Katerina wanted my article, she would have asked me for it. But she hadn't even told me that she would publish a magazine. That's why if I wrote an article, I told Petsis, she wouldn't publish it. Petsis persisted, characteristically saying that if she didn't publish it, he would force her to walk in Omonoia square wearing only her panties. Finally, I wrote an article, Katerina didn't publish it and Petsis didn't force her to publish it.

But the most interesting prisoners visiting me were two others. A prisoner of the common penal law, Panagiotis Ganglias, and an underage prisoner for political reasons, an anarchist, Kyriakos Moiras. Moiras had been imprisoned together with three others, including Vassiliadis, editor of the magazine "Here and Now", as a terrorist (with the new anti-terrorist law 774/78), because, according to the accusation, he had made and thrown molotov bombs in some incidents that had taken place in Agia Barbara of Aegaleo. Of the four, one was acquitted in court while the others were convicted. Vassiliadis was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and Moiras with another underage, Tapoutis, to five. They had Tapoutis in another wing of Korydallos, but I had managed to see him a couple of times. Moiras shared the same cell with Ganglias, who called him "little one" all the time, something that annoyed Moiras a lot. But Moiras was really young, because he was only 18 years old, i.e. a minor according to the laws of that time. And Ganglias did not call him "little one" to hurt him but to tease him. Ganglias seemed like a very good man, in depth, and he had a great sense of humor. Although he talked

non-stop, he was a joy to listen to. After all, he had a lot to say, because he was in and out of prisons since he was a six-year-old child. He had also escaped many times, the last one from the state psychiatric hospital in Dafni, which is why it is also called "Dafni". From what he had told me, in order to go to Dafni he had "anointed" the medical director of the prison hospital, who was such a drachma-lover that he had accepted for the transfer from Ganglias a small part of the money he had requested and waited to take the rest after the escape of Ganglias. According to the words of Ganglias, Ganglias then had only one small banknote (100 drachmas) but even that was enough for the doctor. While we were together, Ganglias had tried again to go to the prisoners' hospital, doing a hemoptysis with blood taken from Moira's finger. I don't remember if his trick was successful. I think he had failed, because it wasn't the first time he had applied this patent and that's why the guards were suspicious.



Kyriakos Moiras at the time I met him.

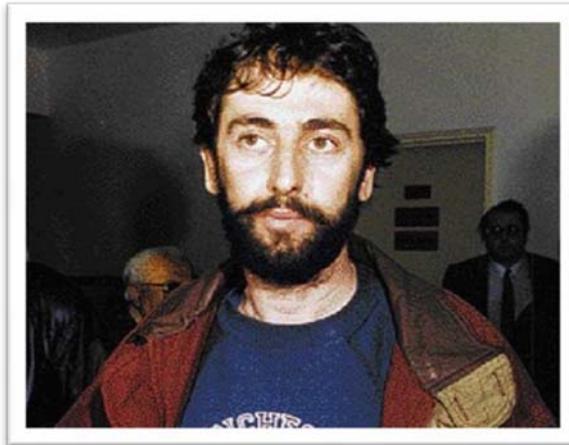
One can easily conclude that, now in Korydallos, I had a much better time than in Aegina. My cell looked like a hotel room! But I hadn't been able to see Sophia either and, as if that wasn't enough, I had heard very bad news about my father. I had last seen my father in a "free visit", i.e. with only a table between us, in Aegina. It was autumn and the Supreme Court's decision on our case had not yet come out. My father was sure that the Supreme Court would overturn the trial, because the trial was a travesty from a legal point of view. That is why he had promised me that he would come and pick me up from the prison of Aegina in his car. From that day on, I only corresponded with my father, who annoyed me with what he wrote, so I responded accordingly. But my last letter was not given to him. My brother had come to visit me in Korydallos and told me that they didn't give it to him so as not to upset him because he was seriously ill and probably didn't have long to live:

He had lung cancer. In fact, my brother had asked me to write another one to make him happy a little. Which I did, of course.

Zirinis Case - Chania Case - Giannis Bouketsidis

It was a time when, in general, developments were rapid. They had brought three people to Korydallos from an organization which the police and the press characterized as terrorist and whose alleged leader was called Kostas Zirinis. That is why this case became known as the Zirinis' case. Three men had been caught as members of this organization, among them Zirinis who was much older than the others, and eleven women, all young. The women were locked up in the women's prisons of Korydallos and the men in the men's prisons. But they had been placed in a different wing and I only managed to see them a couple of times, during the church service. Of course I was never going to church. But in order to see these political prisoners, we made an appointment at the prison church, which was open once a week. After them, they brought other political prisoners, accused of terrorism, to Korydallos prison. Lagadinos, the boyfriend of Alexandra Kasimi whose husband was killed by the police outside the AEG factory in Rentis in 1977, and the journalist Giorgos Oikonomas. Initially, they were brought to the third wing, but because they came directly to my cell and we were talking, they were not left in the third wing but were taken to the second, where Zirinis and the others were. Kasimi and one Evi Kotsou had been imprisoned for the same case. And these, of course, in Korydallos Women's Prisons. In fact, Kotsou had ended up in Sophia's cell. The political prisoners they had recently brought in were not anarchists. The only anarchist in the wing besides me was Kyriakos Moiras. But we would not be the only anarchists for long. At the beginning of March 1980, comrade Giannis Bouketsidis was brought to our wing after he had been caught accused of setting fire to a tax office in Nikaiia. Before they brought him to Korydallos, they had him in the Suburban Security Headquarters and tortured him for days with falanga to confess the arson. But they succeeded in nothing and in the end they brought him to the prison with his legs black from the congealed blood that the torture of the falanga had created for him. For this torture Bouketsidis had sued them, but the trial took place after many years. Of course, none of the cops who tortured him went to jail. He had shown me his legs when he came to my cell. He was wearing some sort of shoe without laces where his feet "floated" in. The cops had given them to him and they were much bigger than his size, because they had to fit his falanga-swollen feet. I, more than from his feet, had been impressed by the love with which he embraced me when we met. I understood that he had a high regard for me for my struggles,

which meant to me that my struggles had not been lost, and had secured me the esteem of my comrades. So, the anarchists of the third wing became three.



Giannis Bouketsidis-Orphanidis at the time I met him.

My father dies and they won't even let me go to his funeral

I don't remember if it was before or after the arrival of Bouketsidis in our wing that I received a telegram from my brother, where he wrote to me that my father read my last letter and was happy but died. I must not have given a very good picture of my father to Kyriakos Moiras, because when he saw me sulking, he asked me why I was sad since my father was not good. How could he understand that I always "set the bar too high", as someone told me many years later. Knowing that I had the right to attend his funeral with a police escort, I applied through the social worker to be allowed to go. They refused me with the excuse that the sentence was too long, more than five years, and that's why I didn't even have that right. But, fearing that I might react in an unpredictable way to this disgrace, that day Sophia was brought to me from the women's prisons for a half-hour visit, in the presence of a guard. The diary read March 9, 1980. Later I learned that there were many people and dozens of wreaths at his funeral and that the funeral speech was delivered by the former editor of "Rizospastis" Nikandros Kepesis. Also, the newspaper "Avgi" had a few lines about my father's death that presented him as a resistance fighter. My father died when I was in prison, as did the father of Giannis Scandalis, who was also a resistance fighter and had fought, like Scandalis' mother, in the 1946-1949 civil war with the Democratic Army. Except that Scandalis' father was found dead in the street and then Scandalis was in the disciplinary wing of the disciplinary prison of Corfu and every day got beaten. The guards had laughingly announced this to

him and, although his sentence was not more than five years, he too was not allowed to attend his father's funeral. Finally, Giannis Serifis' father died while his son was in prison. He had been fatally hit by a car, like General Stefanos Sarafis, in 1957.

I was with Bouketsidis and Moiras every day and we had endless conversations. Bouketsidis, unlike Moiras who was very low-key, was a very enthusiastic guy. I remember that from the courtyard of our wing, from where could be seen also the windows of the second wing, he would call Economeas "Konomas" and it could be heard even outside the prison complex, in a way. He also had the brilliant idea to escape by taking the director of the prison hostage, which impressed eighteen-year-old Moira. I, at that stage, had told them to make the escape themselves and not count on me.

Not much time passed after these discussions, not even a month I would say, when Moiras suddenly stopped talking to us. I thought he was pissed off at me because I was making fun of him. And yet, after about ten months I found out that he had not got angry with me but with Bouketsidis, because the latter had closed the door of my cell in his face. I remembered this phase, which was purely a random event in the context of the joke we were making. But Moiras was probably bothered by the joke and didn't tell us.

Uprising in Korydallos Women's Prison, my seventh hunger strike and confinement in solitary confinement

Our separation with Moiras had unpleasant consequences for him. And that's because on April 23, a riot broke out in the Korydallos women's prison, and Bouketsidis and I went on a hunger strike in support of the female prisoners. Moiras, whom I asked to participate, was negative. After three days, because the rebellion in the women's prisons was continuing, the M.A.T. (Riot Police) entered the prison and violently suppressed the rebellion. It must have been then that Moiras also went on hunger strike, but instead of being locked up in the isolation cells of the third wing where they had locked us up, they sent him to the disciplinary prison of Corfu. There he was forced to spend some ten months before he was brought back to Korydallos. From what I learned when I saw him again after a long time, in Corfu, to stop the strike, they had tried to force-feed him with a tube through his nose and had bloodied his nose. He had been forced to stop to avoid the worst.

Me and Bouketsidis, from the first day of the strike, we were taken, as I said above, to the isolation cells of the third ray. Like the disciplinary cells of Aegina, the isolation cells at Korydallos all faced a corridor. At the end of the corridor was a wall, while at the beginning there was a door. Each cell had a Turkish toilet. They kept us locked up there for 23, or 23 and a half, hours a day. Half or

one hour, they let us out to a small yard that each cell had. In the yard we went out through an iron door that was opposite the iron entrance door of the cell. That is, the cell had two iron doors facing each other and no window. The entrance door had a peephole so that the guard could see what we were doing in the cell and a small square part, which opened downwards, at right angles to the door, on top of which it was put the pannikin with the food by the prisoner working in the kitchen. I don't remember if it was then or another time that I was locked up again in the isolations of the third ray, that I woke up one morning to see a mouse walking on the floor. I don't remember how it left the cell when I chased it. I also don't remember if it was that time when in a cell between mine and Bouketsidis, which was at the end of the corridor, they had put a prisoner, Kyrimis, who knew that we were also in isolation and asked us if we wanted to say to him anything confidential, to convey it to our anarchist sympathizers, as he was waiting to be brought to court for some trial. Of course we couldn't trust a man we didn't know, so we didn't tell him anything. Quite the opposite. When we shouted at each other, we were careful at what we were saying, as Kyrimis intervened and listened to what we were saying. Finally, we were kept about twenty days the solitary confinement. Then they sent us to continue our hunger strike in the prisoners' hospital of the Korydallos prison complex.

In the prisoners' hospital "Agios Pavlos" of Korydallos with Giannis Bouketsidis, Giannis Scandalis, Giannis Petopoulos and Sophia - My acquaintance with Leonidas Christakis

Bouketsidis had been sent before me, so when they took me, I found him there. In fact, because we hadn't agreed on the end of the strike when he got to the hospital he thought of stopping it, or because his mother didn't know that we were continuing the strike, his mother had brought him some food. In the end, she was forced to take it back, because we agreed not to stop the strike unless they put us in the same ward with Giannis Scandalis, who had also come hunger striking, and unless they didn't also bring Sophia to the hospital, since she also went on hunger strike. Scandalis had been brought from the prison of Chalkida, where he was, because he too had started a hunger strike in support of the female prisoners and had even filled the space above his bed in the ward with slogans. At that time, Stefis was the director of the Chalkida prisons. At least this time, Giannis had not been beaten, as he always was in Corfu, when he was on hunger strike. All three of us, in order to push to be put in the same ward, had laid down in the corridor of the first floor, where the wards were, and threatened to stay there until we were put in the same ward. Until they decide what to do, in context of their tactic of

"appeasing the spirits", they brought us an investigator, who appeared willing to take statements from us on our complaints. That scene was for laughing and crying. More for laughs and less for tears: Seeing three guys lying in a busy hospital corridor and an investigator kneeling next to them taking statements from them!

Before nightfall we had won our battle with the hospital administration. They put us in the same ward, our beds next to each other, and next to us, near the window, a tattooed guy who was a waiter at the hospital to reduce his sentence. Next to his bed he had a small bench with tools for repairing transistors (portable radios). He was not wearing the pajamas that the hospital gave to his inmates, but his clothes. With such privileged treatment at the hospital, it was very possible that he was an informant, although we didn't think of that at first. We began to suspect it when we saw him using drugs and even selling pills, which were then used instead of drugs: Ardan. We were not in front of the transaction but we saw him beating someone who had come to our ward to get more pills, in addition to the ones he had originally bought, giving a watch. At that time, watches had value, because the electronic watches that sell cheap today had not yet been spread. The "customer" demanded more forcefully, so the "merchant", pulling down his pajama jacket to immobilize his hands, began headbutting him on the chest. Before the guard came who heard the commotion, another burly prisoner from our cell, or from one nearby, hid an iron bar in the window sill of the cell. When the guard arrived, the commotion had stopped and to the question "What happened?" they answered him "Nothing". He made a rudimentary search of the ward for any iron bar, as other informants would have told him, found nothing, and left quietly. After all, the drug seller had no need for iron bar. On his counter he had a bunch of tools he could use for weapons. We had him by our side while we stayed in the hospital in that phase, all of us together.

A few days later, they also brought Sophia to the hospital. The women's floor was the second floor and the ward they were in happened to be right above ours. This allowed us to go out to the window and she would also go out and talk. Sometime she was talking to me, sometime to Scandalis, sometime to Bouketsidis. This bothered the guards but we ignored their recommendations. Our strike, however, lasted 34 days, if I remember correctly. Then they put us all on a special diet to restore our bodies.

During his recovery, our acquaintance from the psychiatric hospital, former roommate of Scandalis, Giannis Petropoulos, also managed to come to the hospital. Giannis was delighted with our competitiveness and made sure to cover us against possible attacks by ruffians. One such person must have been a certain Kartelias, who once appeared in our ward with a bed that was placed to lie in the middle of the ward. He, every time we were talking to Sophia, he was saying that we were

bothering him. Later I learned that he said that, if Petropoulos had not been in the middle, he would have hit me. I was seen as the leader of the group and because of that I gathered the hatred of the ruffians. Another prisoner who had come to meet us then was a man called Giannaris. He also had a good name among the prisoners, i.e. that he was a fighting element. Not long after we met, I learned that he breathed his last in a disciplinary cell of Korydallos prison, where he had been locked up for fighting with the guards. He died because he was kicked in the stomach by the guards, and this way was broken a thermometer he had swallowed to avoid the beatings. He was poisoned by the mercury in the thermometer. Another interesting prisoner I met then, also a client of the waiter from whom he used to get pills, was Gisdakis. He was a man from Corfu, about forty years old, very kind and smiling. He had excellent drawing skills which I tried to capitalize on by buying him a box of crayons. With these he made some beautiful paintings, of which he gave me three. I even framed one about flying saucers visiting a future city, when I was released from the prison.

But the most interesting prisoner I met in the prison hospital at that period, shortly after the end of the strike, was Leonidas Christakis, the editor of the magazine "Ideodromio". He was also in prison as a suspect for terrorism. They had initially sent him to the prison of Aegina from where, after some time, he managed to come to the hospital. He came and found me on my bed in my room. I told him that I had seen him outside, without our having spoken, and that I knew the magazine of which, some time before, I had asked him to send me all the issues. He told me he had sent them but I didn't know because the guards had kept them. Then I had sent him an ironic letter and he "treated" me afterwards, for my ingratitude, in his magazine. From our first meeting with Leonidas, I remember him telling me that we speak the same "langage", i.e. (in French) the same language. Regarding our meeting, he later wrote in his book "Mr. Athens", that I had reminded him of the corpses from the great famine in Athens, in the winter of 1941-1942, which were collected at the corner of Akademia street and Asklipiou street (by that time the current Cultural Center of the municipality of Athens was a hospital) and they put them in large sacks of sugar, to take them to the cemetery. I was so thin from the hunger strike I had just stopped. Fortunately, Leonidas, after about six months of pre-trial detention, was acquitted of all charges in court and released.



A fairly representative image of Leonidas Christakis, several years after our acquaintance

Our "sedition" at the Korydallos Prisoners' Hospital

It's not just us who had a problem, with Kartelias in particular, because we were talking at the window with Sophia. And Sophia had a problem, because they made sure to send a psychotic woman to her ward, which kept creating episodes. We could hear her shouts all the way to our room. Nevertheless, we did not give up. So they thought of turning the convicts against us, spreading the word that their food is inadequate and of low quality, because ours, the special strike diet, is improved. In other words, they were saying that the money that would have been spent on improving the food of the rest, was spent so that we could eat better. And since even this effort of the guards did not work, they decided to kick us out of the hospital. On the eve of the day we had learned that we would be expelled, we decided to rebel. Scandalis and Bouketsidis wrote a series of slogans on pieces of paper and we stuck them above our beds. These slogans, as recorded by Giannis Petropoulos who recorded our struggle in a notebook, were:

JUSTICE AND ARIOS PAGOS IS A BROTHERHOOD OF IMPERIALISM, THEY ARE KILLING US. THEY ARE KILLING US BECAUSE WE ARE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISTS THEY ARE FASCISTS. FELLOWS IF THEY ARE KILL US NOW TOMORROW IT WILL BE YOUR TURN. NO MORE TORTURES. NO OTHER HUMILIATIONS. NO MORE MURDERS. THE HOSPITAL KILLS. DOCTORS COVER UP MURDER. THEY SEND OUT DEAD EVERY DAY. THEY ARE KILLING US THIS IS NOT A HOSPITAL IT'S A HITLER DEATH CAMP. DEATH IN THE LACKEYS OF IMPERIALISM. DOCTORS SIGN AND LEGALIZE THE TORTURES AND MURDERS OF THE GUARDS.

WE ARE TREATED WORSE THAN PIGS. WE ARE PEOPLE NOT PIGS. DEATH TO FASCISM. THOSE WHO DIPPED THEIR HANDS IN BLOOD WILL PAY DEARLY FOR THEIR CRIMES. DOWN WITH THE STATE. FOR COMMUNISM AND FREEDOM. LONG LIVE ANARCHY. REVOLUTION. NOT TO BE ARREST NOT TO BE JAILED NOT TO BE MURDERED. VICTORY OR DEATH. THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION IS NOT ARRESTED, IS NOT PRISONED, IS NOT KILLED. FIGHT UNTIL VICTORY. JUSTICE IS A WHORE. THE HOSPITAL IS A SLAUGHTERHOUSE. DOWN WITH STATE REPRESSION AND TERRORISM. LONG LIVE ANARCHY.

Also, Scandalis prepared a text, which we agreed to read every hour, each of us in turn, from the window of the hospital, so that the whole hospital and some of the prisoners' mental hospital, which is nearby, could hear it. This text was aimed at the deputy director of the hospital who was acting as director, Velissaris, and the director of the women's prison Savvoglou and was as follows: "Belissaris, you big-headed and headstrong, shameless and depraved: You tried with 1002 intrigues to incite the whole Prisoners' Hospital against us and all you managed to do was make a fool of yourself in front of all the prisoners. Yet you continue this degrading method, betting on psychopaths, naive and big-headed like yourself. By continuing this tactic your big-headedness and shamelessness have crossed all limits. You must know that even ridicule has limits and that it very easily turns into a disaster. As for your neighbor, the torturer and murderer, the Director of the Women's Prison Savvoglou, whom you cover and cooperate with, big-headed Velissaris, and in fact you showed great willingness in this cooperation, we want to tell you that this arch-torturer and arch-assassin is recorded in the history of the revolutionary movement as an instrument of unprecedented destruction. That is, all the hatred she has for all those who fight for freedom, he channeled it into the face of the fighter Sophia Kyritsis, a young girl who at the age of 19 the prostituted justice had the audacity to sentence her to 5 years in prison, which imprisonment with the arch-torturer and arch-murderer Savvoglou and the psychiatrist Marato is equivalent to a death sentence. Velissaris, experience has repeatedly shown that these things are never forgotten, and the only thing we can suggest to you is not to identify yourself even by mistake with the arch-torturer and arch-murderer Savvoglou. And once again we repeat it DOWN YOUR DIRTY HANDS FROM SOPHIA KYRITSI".

The next morning, about twenty guards came to our cell and asked us to pack up and follow them. We refused and this resulted in us being picked up and taken to Korydallos Prison through the underground tunnel that connects it to the prisoners' hospital. I saw Giannis Bouketsidis being beaten, at least once, during

the transportation. At the time when we were brought down to the hospital courtyard, Sophia had come out of her window and was shouting slogans against the guards. Before we were picked up, we had agreed that if they picked us up we would start a new hunger strike, which we did. The text with the demands of the strike, apart from the names I remember and added by myself, is from Petropoulos' notebook. Note by Petropoulos: "Declaration of the new hunger strike. From today we go on hunger strike with demands: Abolition of the murderous treatment we face in prisons and which pushes us every now and then to hunger strikes and puts our lives in immediate danger. Abolition of the exterminating treatment we face in the Prisoners' Hospital during and after the strikes end. Prosecution and exemplary punishment of the chief torturer Director of the Women's Prisons Savvoglou, removal of the arch-murderer psychiatrist Maratos from the Women's Prisons, temporary suspension of the sentence of Sophia Kyritsis to avoid irreparable damage to her health and immediate release of Giannis Bouketsidis. 21/7/80 Giannis Scandalis Filippas Kyritsis Giannis Bouketsidis".

Back in the solitary confinement of Korydallos – Eighth hunger strike

In Korydallos they left us lying on the floor in the chief jailer's office, since we were not moving. Then the chief jailer was a Zervas, who had a reputation as a ruthless torturer, which he had built up while he was warden in the disciplinary prison of Corfu. He was talking to us and we didn't answer him, until after an hour he gave the order to take us up to the solitary confinement cells of the third wing. Thus, Bouketsidis and I met again where we started the previous hunger strike, only this time we had Scandalis with us. For fear that he would be beaten, sometime when the food had been brought to us in the cells and had been left in the open square parts of our cell doors, I pushed it and threw it on the floor, because I thought he had thrown it too. And yet no one had thrown it but me. This caused the warden Zervas to appear in my cell, along with five or six guards, and threaten to make me sweep it off the floor with my tongue. I replied that no matter what he does, I will not leave the food in my door, so they should stop bringing me food. Finally, not only did they not beat me and stopped bringing us food, but Zervas allowed me to go into the warehouse and get some books that had come to me by mail from England. So in the solitary confinement I may have had nothing else, but I had books. Not only that but, not having received a twelve-volume junior encyclopedia of Oxford University that I had ordered, Zervas decided to complain to the Korydallos post office. From there he was told that the encyclopedia had been sent on the condition that it be paid cash on delivery. For this service to me, Zervas was asking me to acknowledge that he is taking care of us and he treats

us like no other prisoner. He probably thought we were terrorists and if he harmed us, our fellow terrorists outside would take revenge on him. Good thing he thought like that, because if he hadn't been afraid, I would have paid dearly for my mistake of dumping the pannikin on the floor of the isolations' cells corridor. Later, while Zervas was still warden at Korydallos, it was rumored that he had beaten to death a black man who had punched him.

I think it was during my incarceration, in the solitary confinement cells of the third wing, that I received from Sophia a card that was in the envelope of the Pink Floyd 33 rpm record "Wish you were here". I knew that this record was her favorite record by her most favorite rock band and I understood how important it was for her me to be able to be there near her during these difficult times. Because, as I had learned, she too was on hunger strike in the women's prisons where she had been returned. Unfortunately, it took years to get back together. Anyway, after about 20 days of hunger strike, we were sent back to the prison hospital. But this time they put us on the other side of the wing, so that we wouldn't have the women's ward above us. We continued our strike until 38 days, i.e. it lasted from July 22 to August 29, 1980. When we stopped, we threw ourselves headlong into the food and this cost both Bouketsidis and Scandalis dearly. Bouketsidis, who had drunk a lot of chocolate milk, began to vomit continuously, resulting in vitamin injections and serum to prevent dehydration, while Scandalis, who had eaten a lot of salty food, suffered a flare-up in his mouth and he could feel his mouth burning. His problem was so severe that he could not speak. Bouketsidis, who had meanwhile recovered, seeing that they were doing nothing for Scandalis, had gone out to the window and threatened "gods and demons" if they did not do something for Scandalis, until a doctor came and Scandalis gave him to understand that it needed ink. The doctor came out of the hospital and found in a pharmacy this special ink, "Bleu de methylene", which, indeed, solved the problem of Scandalis.

Bouketsidis released from prison, ninth hunger strike, isolated in the mental hospital

During the period of recovery from this hunger strike of ours, Bouketsidis quarreled with me, because in his view I had imposed a hierarchy between us and had put Scandalis higher than myself and Bouketsidis lower than myself. That is why, although we had agreed to try not to be expelled from the hospital, before we closed a month of recovery, Bouketsidis, after two weeks from the day we had stopped, asked and left for Korydallos prisons. From there he went to court, where he was cleared of the charges and released from prison. Us, after about fifteen days we were again sent to Korydallos prisons, where we started a new hunger

strike. From there they brought us again to the prisoners' hospital, and because we did not stop the hunger strike, they brought us the forensic surgeon Panagiotis Giamarellos, who declared us insane and sent us to the prisoners' psychiatric hospital. There, fortunately, we were not tied to the confinement beds in the basement but locked in a ward, which had previously been emptied of prisoners. We were locked in this ward 24 hours a day until we stopped the strike. We would not stop, unless they give us a paper signed by someone in charge, which would guarantee our stay in the prisoners' hospital for three months, at least, in order to recover from the strike. Giannis Petropoulos had also come to the mental hospital, and, in order to support us, illegally sent the following letter to the journalist Giorgos Oikonomas who was already out, as were all of the "Chania case" who had been caught with him, because they had been acquitted of the terrorism charges against them with a judicial decision or in the court (I don't remember).

"Dear
Oikonomas

22/10/80

Still fresh in my memory is your dynamic revelation, at the time when you were also a prisoner in the murderous basements of the Security Police, criticizing and feeling ashamed even of your own teachers, as well as your published phrase "as long as there are prisoners , we will never feel free", which you said the same day you were walking out of the prison door. Giving us all joy, since we saw in your fingers your pen and your hand in conscience, which would expose and condemn the gendarme and harlot Justice, whose indignities and crimes are indescribable and which need infinite reams of paper to express only what I know.

Well, I now come to the main subject I will concern you with, writing this letter which will bear my signature and the torture and pain of all my fellow prisoners, combatants and non-combatants. A letter that, coming out of the high walls and thick irons, will come into your hands, to tell you not a protest but a True TESTIMONY.

For a long time now and under unimaginable conditions of brutality, and after many murders (Ap. Katsouras, D. Botsis, T. Kanakis, Fotoulakis, V. Gikas, E. Giannaris, etc., etc.) and countless tortures in the basements of Eptapyrgio, the well-known ones of Corfu and the dumb ones of Halicarnassus, and with the hellish place known as the Psychiatry leading the way in the specializations of murders, under these and thousands of other oppressive conditions, all of which are drowned in the nooses of clubs and in chains, and finding no other way to break this silence, with a superhuman effort to get their voice outside the heavy walls, defying their very lives, my fellow prisoners Filippas Kyritsis, Giannis Scandalis, Sophia Kyritsis started hunger strikes.

The first event for the FREEDOM in the Women's Prisons was destroyed by the civilized social relations that govern our culture, turning against unarmed and INNOCENT women armed man-eating beasts. What an honor for Justice, it defeated them!!

While at the Hospital they kept the strike for around 50 days! And while they were recovering, these beasts in green uniforms (filled with the blood of innocents) rushed in again and after immobilizing them! they forcibly transported them to the disciplinary cells of Korydallos prison. From there they started again a new hunger strike and after keeping them for 15 days in the disciplinary cells, they brought them and isolated them in a ward of the Hospital, locking them, not caring about their lives and at the same time pushing us convicts of the common penal law against them, here is the dirt in all its glory.

At the end of this STRIKE, they rushed the animals again and forcibly took them to the Korydallos disciplinary cells, which only those who have been through them know what the word disciplinary cell is. And from there they again started a new hunger strike, while their lives and their health were at the end of their endurance. While on the other hand science was entering the service of crime, obviously now.

About their previous strikes I have written in a separate part which I will try to publish. Therefore, what I will write to you in particular is their latest strike which is currently going on for about 20 days. After being transferred from the disciplinary cells, to the isolation of the Hospital, and from there to the hell called the Psychiatry Hospital (whose crimes are signed by the doctors as suicides) they are locked in a ward and outside the door they have placed young future murderers who don't let anyone approach, while inside my two fellow prisoners, having defeated death, are perhaps living their last moments with a smile on their lips...

Dear George: Don't let these criminals do this nameless crime. Don't let them hold your VOICE.

All my fellow prisoners are pinning their hopes on you, because only you can BRING THE VOICE OUT OF PRISON.

The ward is on the first floor No. 37 It is the FIGHT ward.

What I am writing to you are nothing but real truths that I have lived for 10 whole years.

Giannis Petropoulos

Giorgos, write out loud, now many people are listening to you".

I don't remember how many days this strike lasted. I remember, however, that we finally got the paper we were asking for. We went back to the prisoners' hospital and stayed as long as we wanted. I can say that, finally, our treatment by the guards and the Department of Justice was beginning to change. As when we were with Bouketsidis, so now we were put in a ward by ourselves and I, if

I remember well, I also made a few visits with Sophia when they brought her from the women's prisons. Although the director of the hospital Nikitas Polias tried to make life difficult for us, the new chief warden satisfied the most of our requests. On the evening of the 17th November 1980 he came to tell us that there was chaos outside, during the march for the anniversary of the Polytechnic massacre. And indeed, the cops had killed two protesters, the student Iakovos Koumis and the worker Stamatina Kanellopoulou, and wounded Stefanos Papapolymerou with a bullet in the chest. Of course no cop paid for these crimes.

In January or February 1981, we were sent to the prison of Korydallos, again in the third wing, but this time in the same cell, the 66.

In the third wing of the prison of Korydallos with Scandalis and Moiras – The great earthquake of 26th of February – Our abuse and the transfer to Patras – Tenth hunger strike

It has been established that prison is lighter when you have companions near you and especially when you have fought to have them near you. And we, at the beginning of 1981, not only lived only us in the same cell, but in the same wing, Kyriakos Moiras had finally arrived from Corfu, so we were three prisoners for political reasons in the wing. And we also had with us the prisoner of the common penal law Panagiotis Ganglias, who in the past was Moiras' roommate, i.e. they lived in the same cell. Ganglias was a formidable personality, as I let it be understood above, and that is why his company was always desirable to us. Also, within the same wing they had brought Giorgos Giorgantonakis, the old calendarist priest whom I had met in the prison of Aegina. Giorgantonakis also in Korydallos continued his work of selfless social contribution to prisoners who needed legal information or applications and reports to the authorities. To help him in his task, I presented him with an annotated Code of Criminal Procedure. And he, in memory of our friendship, gave me a book bound in the library of Korydallos prisons consisting of blank pages and a New Testament of the Bible Society with text and translation.

Although we were now in an advantageous position compared to the past, we felt that we should not stop fighting. We did not like many things in the Korydallos prison, in the sense that they violated basic rights of the prisoners. That is why we drafted a report to the Ministry of Justice, which we submitted. We never got a response to this report. On the contrary, at the end of February, Athens and, of course, the prison, were shaken by a great earthquake of 6.6 on the Richter scale and, because of our attitude during the aftershocks, was also shaken our own favorable position that we had secured through our struggles within the prisons.

Things developed like this: Around 10 o'clock in the evening of the 26th of February and while we were locked in our cell and we were lying down, we heard a loud noise and the building began to shake very violently. We jumped out of our beds and started kicking the cell door hard to be let out so we wouldn't be crushed locked in our cells. And the other inmates of the wing were kicking the doors and shouting, causing pandemonium. After some minutes, and while the aftershocks continued, the cells and the courtyard door were opened for us and we ran panicked into the courtyard. I remember running so fast to get out of the wing that when I saw someone fallen down in the corridor of our floor because of the commotion, I jumped over him. We spent that evening, anyone who wanted, in the yard of the wing. That night has left indelible memories for me, because it was the first time, after two years and eleven months, that I saw the night sky again. All the previous time I spent the night locked in a ward or a cell. Only if one is deprived of the view of the sky at night, can one understand how beautiful it is. I too had been deprived of it for years. Nevertheless, at five o'clock in the morning, I decided to go back to sleep in my cell, hoping that such a great earthquake would not happen again, and that, if it did, I would have the time to run into the yard, as the doors of the cells and the wing they remained unlocked.

The aftershocks continued for several days and that's why they didn't lock us up. At first they didn't even lock the door that led to the yard, but from a certain point on they didn't just lock the cell doors. Until, one day, before the aftershocks had completely stopped, they decided to lock us up. Me, Scandalis and Moiras decided to refuse to be locked as the aftershocks continued. The three of us headed to my and Scandalis's cell and when the guards came to lock us in we told them we weren't going in. They left without continuing to lock the rest of the cells in the radius and after a while they came back and unlocked the cells they had already locked. A deputy guard and a couple of guards came to our cell and told us to change the wing, because some prisoners of the wing intended to harm us. We told them that we are not going anywhere and we are not afraid of anyone. They left and we went out on the bridge that joins the corridors of the cells on the first floor. Then someone appeared on the ground floor, under the bridge, who had packed his things and was leaving the wing and started cursing and threatening us. I, over the bridge, threw him a cigarette I was smoking and told him to go fuck himself. He left the wing and so did this threat against us. But we had a premonition that something was not going well at all and that from here on we were in danger. Not from the prisoners, for we had, as politicians, too good a name for anyone to dare to attack us, but from the guards. So Moiras spent that evening in our cell talking with us. I, at daybreak, I went to sleep, though I suspected we might get beaten hard the next day. I can certainly say that I did not suffer from insomnia at that time!

And indeed the other day my fears were confirmed. Of course, we would have avoided the beating, if we had not insisted that the cells not be locked again for midday due to the aftershocks. But we considered it the right of the prisoners not to be in danger of another strong earthquake, since the aftershocks continued, even if at much less frequent intervals. That's why we decided not to let them lock us up and, in case they came to take us to the solitary confinement cells, to lie on our beds and not make a move. So, when 12 noon arrived and the cells were being closed, Kyriakos was outside our own cell and we refused to go inside to be locked up. Of the other prisoners, only one, tall and thin, refused to be locked up. After locking the cells, the guards left and we waited for the consequences. The prisoner, unknown to us, was also very nervous and was running up and down the corridor of the first floor on the opposite side of our cell. After a while they appeared and told us to pack up because we were moving. Kyriakos went to say something and was pushed, causing the Turkish coffee he was holding in his hand to spill. We lay in our beds. They grabbed Kyriakos violently and took him, beating him, to the solitary confinement cell, while we were carried as sucks , i.e. one guard held us by the armpits and two by the legs, to the chief warden's office. Along the way, they hit us every now and then because we didn't walk. When we arrived at the chief warden's office they let us down and told us to get up and collect our things to leave. Because we didn't get up, they started threatening us, punching us and kicking us. I, seeing that many had gathered above Scandalis and were beating him, began to curse them "murderers" etc. in order that they would let him go and catch me. When they gathered on top of me, Scandalis did the same to save me. I can't say that I was in pain from the blows in so much fluff. But at one point, I was really scared when, lying on my back on the floor, a guard took the opportunity to start stomping on my nose to get me up. I didn't get up, but I was honestly afraid that from "excessive zeal" he would break my nose. Finally, the director Krinis and the chief warden Efthymiou appeared and told them to stop beating us. I do not believe that the director and the chief warden did not know anything for so long. After all, we were known to them from the prisoner psychiatric hospital, where they were the director and chief warden respectively, before they came to the main prison. That's why in the lawsuit I filed, when this "festival" ended after a week or so, I included them also as responsible for my abuse.

After they stopped beating us, they picked us up again, just like before, to take us to the exit of the prison, to put us in a Black Maria. In the corridor that connects the main prison with the exit of the prison, the former director of Korydallos Papadogoulas saw us and told them to let us down. He then came over me and was asking me to get serious and get up, because it was a shame for a man like me to let himself be in this mess. I answered him, if I remember correctly, that for that

mess the responsible wasn't me but the guards. Seeing that he was getting nowhere with me, he left and the guards took us up to the exit again and after opening the outer door of the prison, they threw us into a Black Maria. That's where the abuse we suffered in Korydallos ended. As the Black Marila was leaving we didn't speak. The first thing I said, when I started talking to Giannis, was that he looked awfully. He replied that I had the same miserable look from the beating. We reassured each other that, despite everything, we felt good and were therefore determined to continue the fight. This was the first time I was beaten in my life from organs of power.

We didn't know where they were taking us. We assumed that they were going to take us to Corfu, because it was a disciplinary prison and they could easily have characterized our refusal to be locked in our cell as a sedition. In fact, when the Black Maria entered the Athens-Patras highway, we were sure of it. But though we were worried about what we were going to suffer in Corfu, we felt strong enough because we believed in each other. We had just passed "with our heads held high" the test of, in a way, sacrificing one for the other, while we were being beaten in the Korydallos prison, and for this reason we feel that we could, without fearing the cost, re-engage successfully in a militant opposition to our persecutors. We decided, therefore, in the first phase, to start a hunger strike with the aim of our return to Korydallos and, as soon as they took us down to the prison, to refuse to move, so that they would be forced to carry us again. But in order not to be unfairly beaten by the transit cops, because we wouldn't be able to find them easily afterwards to sue them, we decided to walk from the Black Maria to the entrance of the prison, where the cops would hand us over to the guards.

In the end they did not take us to Corfu but to the prison of Agios Stefanos which is outside of Patras. As we had agreed, when the police handed us over to the guards, we announced the hunger strike, sat down leaning against a wall and refused to talk or walk. The guards, in order to make us believe that they "didn't give a damn for us", left us abandoned at the entrance of the prison for a long time. We, of course, did not believe them, because, after so much we had seen in recent years, we knew the importance we had for the Ministry of Justice, and consequently for the Correctional Service. That's why, in the end, they had to carry us from there and take us to the disciplinary cells. The pleasant thing was that they put us in the same cell and that gave us strength.

After some days they sent us a doctor to see how we were, but, as was our custom, we did not let him examine us, in order that they might not know the exact state of our health and thus not worry. One day the guards left and came to our cell two prisoners, who told us that they had heard a lot about our struggles, that they considered us "Leventes" and that with us as vanguards they were able to raise the whole prison in revolt. We were also told that there were friends of ours in prison like Axypolitos, who would support us. We answered them that we

had no intention to stay in this prison and that's why we went on strike, namely to return to Korydallos. In other words, we were not prepared to stir up the people, who could, in fact, pay dearly for an uprising with the entry of the M.A.T. in prison. And the suppression of a rebellion would be easily done in this prison, because this prison was in the middle of nowhere and there were no houses around the prison, so that the people could hear our demands and see what they would do to us during the suppression. When these two prisoners left, we agreed with Scandalis that they must have been stool pigeons who wanted to set us up for adventures, otherwise the fact that the guards had opened the door for them to visit us was inexplicable. What kind of solitary confinement was this? After that the next day the doctor came again, we again refused to examine us and he left telling us that the next day we would be sent to Korydallos.

They transfer us to the disciplinary prison of Corfu, again abuse

So, when they came to pick us up the next day, we thought they were going to take us to Korydallos. We were already on the sixth or seventh day of our hunger strike and that's why we thought they were interested in ending it. And yet... During the journey with the Black Maria we realized that we were not going to Athens but to Corfu, judging by the fact that the bus ended up in Rio and was waiting for the ferry to the opposite side (then there was no bridge), by the fact that also it was Wednesday, the day when the transfers to Corfu used to take place, and from the fact that with this Black Maria had been transferred also prisoners who we knew had been taken to Corfu. These were Montesavvas (Savvas Bamiatzoglou) and John Petropoulos. We understood this because they had written with a marker on the backs of the seats. MonteSavvas wrote "Long live the revolution" and such with his own signature, and Petropoulos an excellent passage from Bertol Brecht's play "The Good Man of Szechuan":

" When injustices are committed in a city,
There must be a revolution.
And where there is no revolution, it is better,
To fall fire to burn the city,
Before night falls!"

Something that had impressed us on the way was that all the way in front of our bus, a police car was leading and another was coming from behind it, as if the most dangerous criminals of Greece were being transported to this Black Maria! And yet, to be considered as such flattered us anyway, because it confirmed the great importance we believed we had for the Greek state. But another thing that proves how disorganized the state was then, is that we didn't stay alone in the Black Maria all the way. From Ioannina they brought to our bus an old woman dressed in black,

who, as we learned, was intended for the psychiatric hospital of Corfu. When we left Ioannina it was already dark and, because it was still March and we were in Western Greece, it had also started raining. Along with our worry about what awaited us in the notorious for the tortures disciplinary prison of Corfu, when we would collapse at the entrance and refuse to walk, we also had the bad weather dampening our spirits. And, as if all this wasn't enough, we also had the old woman who sang dirges all along the way, like "this earth, where we step, we will all enter it" and kept repeating that "the black earth will eat us". With this "ominous" company we arrived in Igoumenitsa at 11 o'clock in the evening and took the ferry boat to Corfu. And all this time we had not been taken out of the Black Maria at all and that's why now that I'm writing this, after so many years, it strikes me that we didn't pee. We probably wouldn't have even drunk water.

So on March 18, 1981, I found myself again in Corfu, where I hadn't been since 1974, when I had been there during the six-day school trip, about which I spoke above. By then I had traveled with a bus like a student, now I was going in a Black Maria like a thug. Luck had brought things in such a way that I also got to know the infamous prison of Corfu which was then the fear and terror of the prisoners. And I got to know it. We left the black-clad dirge singer at the Corfu psychiatric hospital and arrived at the illuminated entrance of the prison. We descended into the rain, entered the corridor leading from the outer gate to the chief prison, and, as we had agreed among ourselves, collapsed on the cement and did not take a step. As we expected, the guards pounced on us and began hitting and pinching us to get us up. But we were determined, so they were forced to carry us to the main prison, even by dragging us on the wet cement of the corridor. At the prison we ended up again lying on the floor like empty sacks. We did not answer any of their questions and this audacity of ours, as well as the fact that they were forced to carry us, had made a terrible impression on them, because at that time Corfu was the Greek Dachau. A guard who saw me for the first time, while he knew Scandalis from the previous transfers, was curious to ask a guard, Deligiannis, whom I knew from the prisons of Aegina and now saw him in Corfu, who was I who was causing so many problems. The former guard of Aegina answered him that I am Kyritsis, "a great personality", so that he would not be surprised by my attitude. I, carried away by his supposed admiration, when this guard took my cigarettes in his hands and asked whose they were, spoke to him saying they were mine, hoping he would give them to me. I found myself looking like a fool, as everyone who expects any mercy from the authorities. He didn't give me the cigarettes and on the orders of director Kollas, who warned us that in the morning they would force-feed us, we were carried to the disciplinary wing K, where we were thrown into two cells, which had nothing but a dirty mattress so thin, as if they were four or five blankets together, and a dirty gray military blanket. So I was given the opportunity to get to know the

cells as well of the infamous disciplinary prison of Corfu. They didn't seem foreign to me. They looked like the cells of the disciplinary prison of Aegina. The only difference was that their windows were holes about 50 by 50 centimeters in a very thick wall, almost 50 centimeters thick, just like the windows of the wards in Aegina. This similarity made me not feel uncomfortable in there. Although I expected to fight the next day to avoid being force-fed, I fell asleep quickly and even had one of the most beautiful dreams of my life. A dream that happened to be prophetic. Specifically, influenced by the environment that reminded me of a medieval castle, that night I dreamed that I was in a green meadow surrounded by a pile of ruins from a medieval castle. The meadow was bathed in the sun, it was terribly quiet and I was alone. I saw this dream come true in Lefkada, a year later.

In the morning I was suddenly woken up by footsteps and shouts. The door was unlocked and swung open and a deputy warden and about a dozen guards entered. The deputy warden asked me to go to the prison barber to cut my beard and hair, because it was forbidden to have long beards and hair. I told them that I don't cut my hair and they told me that they would cut my hair by force. As they did. Many guards fell on me, tied my hands and, holding me down, allowed one of them to cut my beard and hair with a pair of scissors. On leaving, they told me they would come back to force-feed me. But their hopes were refuted. When they came again, they came to tell me to get up for transfer to Athens. I, although this was my goal, did not do them the favor of getting up, so they were again forced to carry me, or rather drag me, to the Black Maria that awaited us outside the prison entrance. On the way, of course, they didn't forget to throw me the usual slaps and the usual pinches, to make me stand on my feet. I did them no favors. When, finally, I and Giannis Scandalis were together again in the Black Maria, where also were two other prisoners who were being sent to Athens, I did not know what a feat I had accomplished with the help of the support movement. I did not know that the day before there had been a large demonstration, of at least two thousand people, for the first time outside the Korydallos prisons, which upset the Minister of Justice Stamatis and made him order our return to Athens, to the Korydallos prisoners' hospital, as we aimed with our strike. I did not know that the dreadful and terrible disciplinary prison of Corfu had not managed to keep me for more than one night, during the entire sentence I served. For this feat I have the right to be proud throughout my life.

Back to the Prisoners' Hospital of Korydallos- The Initiative of Support to the Prisoners' Struggles

The Black Maria started in the morning from Corfu and, as usual, going very slowly compared to intercity buses and cars, arrived in Athens in the evening. During the journey we made acquaintance with the other two prisoners, Dardis and an Iraqi who seemed to be a very good boy. From them we learned that MonteSavvas was in Corfu and had threatened the service that he would do them great harm if they harmed us. As for the Iraqi, he had left Iraq because he had deserted from Saddam Hussein's army. The eight-year war between Iraq and Iran had already begun, which cost around five hundred thousand dead, soldiers and civilians. Our Iraqi friend, unlike the Greek leftists who supported him, considered Saddam Hussein a dictator. In fact, the brother of our Iraqi friend was being persecuted by the Iraqi police for political reasons. If our friend had stayed in Iraq, he would not have ended well. I never saw this friend of ours again after that trip. I will never forget that, when we arrived at night at the Korydallos prison hospital and, as we had agreed with Scandalis, we were not walking, when we were told to get down from the cage (we were not waiting to be beaten in front of the hospital), the Iraqi took me to in his arms and took me to the hospital corridor, where they put me in a wheelchair, to take me to the ward. As they did with Scandalis. Later, this Iraqi participated in the hunger strike that Pisimisis, Tsouvalakis, Louloudis, Engonidis and I don't remember who else had done in the prisons of Patras (Agios Stefanos) in 1982. Anyway, that's how Scandalis and I found ourselves again in the prison hospital, from which we had been absent for so many months, on that rainy night of March 19, 1981. We were not to leave the hospital again, due to successive hunger strikes, until our release.

I don't remember when we stopped our strike. However, I remember that Kyriakos Moiras had also gone on a hunger strike in the prison of Korydallos, while we were doing our "tour" in the prisons of the provinces, and for that reason they also brought him to the hospital. In order not to set a bad example for the other prisoners, they dedicated an entire ward of the hospital for the three of us, the one opposite to the psychiatric hospital for prisoners. In this ward the three of us went on two long hunger strikes of 60 days, which had been monumental. But before I come to them, I would like to say a few words about the situation that was developing in the support movement outside the prison. Specifically, what I want to say is that after his acquittal, in the fall of 1980, Giannis Bouketsidis, in collaboration with the lawyer Katerina Iatropoulou and some of his other companions, managed to set up an Initiative of Support to the struggles of the prisoners. At the center of this committee was the magazine "Tis filakis" (Of the prison), which Katerina had started earlier and had already published two issues

which, in addition to other interesting articles, included complaints by prisoners about what happens in prisons. At first sight this effort seemed very promising. But I already had my suspicions that something was wrong, because this magazine, neither my article that Petsis had asked me to publish, nor did it ask for articles or complaints from us who were there for political reasons and had already suffered a series of abuses, nor did it raise the issue of political prisoners in Greek prisons. As if there were no such people after the end of the 1967-1974 dictatorship. In fact, as Sophia told me later, during a visit that Katerina Iatropoulou had paid her in prison at the time, and Sophia had asked her to do everything they could to bring us back from the prisons of Patras in Athens, Katerina had asked her to go to the prisons of Patras too! Unfortunately, the fact that the Initiative I mentioned earlier, intentionally or unintentionally, aimed to downplay the political struggles of prisoners in prisons, prioritizing the demand for better conditions for all prisoners, proved to be so true, judging by the content of the Initiative's mobilizations, so that during the next strike we had to denounce this disorientation with our text. But before we get to that strike, let's talk a little about what came before.

As it was normal, the fighting attitude that I, Scandalis and Moiras kept, in the face of the vindictiveness of the prison service against us because of our "stance" during the period of the earthquakes, inspired other prisoners as well. The fact that this attitude had become so well-known and had caused so many reactions that a large demonstration took place, for the first time, outside Korydallos prisons, gave hope to other prisoners for a final break of the silence that surrounded prisons in the previous years. A silence that in 1979 had made me write that "Behind the walls of prisons hides the evidence of the crimes of the state". These hopes, as it was expected, created friction between some more courageous prisoners and the prison's service and the service reacted. It was then that a twenty-year-old young man, Xirafis, was found in the mental hospital having committed suicide. His suicide was not accepted as the cause of death by his parents and a process aimed at clarifying the case was started. On the other hand, the newspapers began to focus on the issue of prisons, while they did not leave us, the prisoners for political reasons, unsupported. In particular, after we moved from Corfu, and after I had given my brother my ripped pants from the guards'beating, the newspaper "Ta Nea" which was first in circulation at the time, had dedicated its front page to me with a bold headline "He was beaten in all the prisons" and a photo of my ripped pants. But we also kept adding fuel to the fire. In particular, Scandalis and Moiras and I asked to be examined by a doctor of the prisoners' hospital for the marks we had on our bodies from the beatings, and then, having in our hands the results of the examination which was performed by the medical director of the hospital, surgeon Mr. Ithakisios, we filed lawsuits for our abuse against the director, the

chief warden and unknown to us (in terms of names) guards of Korydallos prison. The lawsuits were handled by our friend, lawyer Eleni Dimoulea, who was closest to us until then, during our struggles. As witnesses we had put my brother who had seen us full of bruises when they brought us to the hospital, and the psychiatrist Thodoros Megaloikonomou who had also come and seen us, always being our closest supporter among the medical world. These lawsuits saw the light of day and boosted the morale of the other prisoners. Until then, the abuse of prisoners by the guards was not dealt with by lawsuits. And if anyone dared file a lawsuit, the competent prosecutor would file it. On the contrary, with our own lawsuits, a process was initiated that was also accompanied by the usual Sworn Administrative Inquiry that usually accompanies such lawsuits and always acquits the guilty parties. These, then, were seeing the light of day and the atmosphere at Korydallos became so tense that the prisoners' mental hospital, the worst hell of the complex, revolted.

The uprising at the Prisoners' Psychiatric Hospital of Korydallos

It must have been April 1981. Scandalis, Moiras and I, after decision of the prison service, occupying the hospital ward that was opposite the mental hospital, we had the opportunity to see the commotion a little better. What I remember most was the last night the rebellion lasted. We had learned that something was happening from earlier, but until the last night the situation was not visible from the hospital. On the last night, however, several prisoners had come at the barred windows of the mental hospital's facade and were shouting slogans, while some were also burning some newspapers or sheets. The most vocal of the rebel prisoners was a man I would never have expected. It was Lazaros Kolymbaris, whom I knew from the previous times I had been in the mental hospital. As I had known him, Kolymbaris did not look at all like a prisoner. He had the air, at least, of an elderly doctor who received patients in his office. Now, after so many years, in my mind I confuse his face with an elderly neurosurgeon, who in 1982, at the Papadimitriou hospital in Penteli, had announced to us something of the most unpleasant and saddest thing I have heard in my life, about which I will talk below. Perhaps, the air of a doctor was given to Kolymbaris by his large baldness and his extremely polite manners. Of course, he might have been a doctor before he went to prison, we don't know that. Also, before that night, we had also seen Kolymbaris at the prisoner hospital, where we were, some time before. He had also been in the hospital for a few days and one day, having been bored from the unhealthy hospital food, he had come to our ward, after the end of our last hunger strike,

and had asked us to give him, if we had, something to eat, as we had known each other from the mental hospital. I distinctly remember that, having secured the privilege of being able to fry eggs in the hospital ward, I decided to make him two fried eggs. Although, after I fried them, Kolyumbaris accepted them with thanks, I was not at all satisfied with myself, because they looked more like an omelette than eggs!

That night Kolymparis had gone out the window of his cell, in the mental hospital, and shouting loudly he revealed, to those who wanted to listen, the abominations that he had until then known to be done by the doctors and the service of the mental hospital. He must have disturbed the guards so much with his revelations that I heard one of them went to his cell and shouted at him to stop.

Perhaps he even threatened him, because at some point I heard Kolymparis, addressing the hospital service and shouting that he would not stop "putting their laundry in public view" even if he knew that it was his last night. He knew that he would pay for the complaints with his life, because they were already refusing to give him some pills he was taking for his heart. But he was determined. He couldn't stand the humiliations and insults anymore. And he sensed that night there was no retreat for him. As he sensed his end. It was a night I will never forget. Even if only for the reason that our fellow prisoner foretold his extermination and turned out to be prophetic. The next day in the morning, around six o'clock, from the windows of the hospital we saw the M.A.T. (Riot police) to enter the psychiatric hospital. For a while we heard voices and then, accompanied by policemen, some prisoners who were probably considered the leaders of the revolt, were led tied outside the main entrance of the mental hospital to be put in Black Marias and taken to other prisons. And as for Kolymparis, he was driven in the private car of the head nurse of the hospital, Mrs. Rapti, to an outside hospital, where he was simply pronounced dead. As I recall, "billing" prison deaths to outside hospitals by transferring inmates to them when they were dying was common at the time. In this way, surely, the doctors and services of the prisons and their hospital facilities absolved themselves of the responsibility for the unexplained sudden deaths of the prisoners. Because it was supposed that outside, the civilian hospitals would keep the prisoners alive...

For me, Scandalis and Moiras, that time when we were all together in the same ward and even alone, was a good time, a time when in the hospital we couldn't be beaten and we weren't forced to cohabit with people we didn't choose and maybe they were also stool pigeons. But we knew we couldn't stay in the hospital much longer, and we would be sent back to the prisons anyway. And to the prisons, after all that we had lived through for so many years, we didn't want to go back. In fact, Scandalis and I were "charged" to the disciplinary prison of

Corfu and that is why, if they kicked us out of the hospital, we would end up there: in the worst prison of Greece. They could do the same to Moiras who had already been ten months, at least, in these awful prison. That is why we had to do something "big" to prevent such unpleasant and dangerous developments. And fortunately, an idea came to me that proved to be a lifesaver.

The eleventh hunger strike that lasted 60 days, demanding Sophia's release from prison

Basically the idea was not original at all. We decided to go on a hunger strike, like so many other times. The originality lay in the request. On the one hand, all three of us and Sophia, would go on a hunger strike with the same demand: "Conditional release" of Sophia after serving 2/3 of her sentence, which was provided for by law but was not implemented. And on the other hand, we would start the strike exactly two months before the date when Sophia could be released by law. So when that date came, we would be on the 60th day of the hunger strike and the state would have to choose between, on the one hand, the release of Sophia after 60 days of strike enforcing the law, and on the other, the usual refusal to enforce the law and the death or force-feeding of the most renowned imprisoned revolutionaries. It would be a difficult decision for the state that the international political circumstances of the time would make it even more difficult, as it turned out. The fact that the Greek deep state saw us as extremely competitive and would hardly apply the law was also proven by the proposal submitted to the competent court for the decision to be taken by the prison service and other competent authorities. In order for the law to be implemented, it would have to be decided by the judges who made up the Piraeus Misdemeanor Council, where the Korydallos prisons belonged. And to decide, they would study, among other things, the proposal of the prison service. The service's proposal was against Sophia's "conditional release", because the service considered Sophia an unrepentant criminal! They had no intention of getting Sophia out of prison, but they were "counting without the innkeeper"! And the innkeeper, this time, was the Irish political prisoners in Northern Ireland's particularly harsh special prisons, who had already begun hunger strikes, one after another, demanding that they cease to be considered criminal prisoners, something which constituted for the guards them the green light for any particular mistreatment.

Already, before we started our own strike, the first of them, Bobby Sands, had died on May 5th (after 66 days of strike) and by May 21st three more: Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara. Their deaths, because they resulted from the intransigence of the then conservative government of Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher, had caused an international sensation to the public opinion

(if there is such a thing when it emerges from the comments of the international press) and had led to a storm of protests, many of which, in Northern Ireland in particular, were extremely violent. The four of us, i.e. me, Scandalis, Moiras and Sophia, started our hunger strike on May 25, when Greek public opinion was already aware of the hunger strikes and the deaths of the four Irishmen and was taking their side against the British government. Moreover, the movement which in the preceding months had been created against prisons in general, could not ignore the hunger strike of the four of us, even if we had no particular weight for this movement, in relation to penal prisoners.

Thus began that hunger strike, which, even if some of the movement in support of the prisoners in general tried to degrade or expose, they did not succeed and it made history. Proof of the ugly games that some of this movement played against us, is also the poster that was released at the time. On this poster was Sophia's photo from her arrest and underneath it was written that the four of us are on hunger strike until death. We had not told anyone that we were on a hunger strike until death, so if we stopped, without having achieved the goal of the strike, they would say of us that we are making fun of the people. Seeing the ugly game that was being played against us during the strike, after my own suggestion, we decided in the text that we would put out for our strike, to clarify things a little, as to what kind of prisoners we were. In particular, in this text (which the smart guy who printed it had the brilliant idea to put at the top of each page, of the 4 it consisted of, only my name, to make it appear that I was substitute the others), we said that just as the Irish Democratic Army prisoners did not consider themselves criminal prisoners and went on hunger strikes to stop being treated as criminals by the British government, so we too had a claim to be considered political prisoners and not criminal prisoners. And as political prisoners we asked for public support because our sentences were excessive owing to our political ideas and not because we had done anything serious. We were not, in short, terrorists, as they accused us. Fortunately, this text of ours, even if the anti-authoritarians of the Solidarity Initiative to the Struggles of the Prisoners did not like it, was also published in the Trotskyist newspaper "Socialist Change" and the magazine "Rixi"(rupture) and thus became more widely known. I think, judging by the results, the attempt to treat us like criminal prisoners has not succeeded.

απαιτούμε την αμεση
αποφυλακιση της
Σοφιας Κυριτση
με τα 2/3 της "ποινης",

**ΑΠΕΡΓΙΑ ΠΕΙΝΑΣ ΜΕΧΡΙ
ΘΑΝΑΤΟΥ ΑΠΟ 25/5
ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΤΣΗ - ΜΟΙΡΑ
ΣΚΑΝΔΑΛΗ.**

**Πρωτοβουλια Συμπαραστασης
στους αγωνες των φυλακισμενων.**

The poster that came out for the hunger strike we did to get Sophia out.

Indeed, our purpose has been achieved. But to achieve it, a huge mobilization was needed, in relation to the mobilizations that had been done up until then for prisoners. I don't think the mobilization would have reached such an extent, if the hunger strike of the Irish people had not continued alongside our strike, which would not have become widely known, if the Irish hunger strikers did not die,

one after the other. It's a sad fact, but it's true: Irish political prisoners had to die on hunger strikes at that time to sensitize the Greeks, or rather a significant number of them, to the hunger strike of four tortured Greek prisoners for political reasons , who were simply asking that the law be applied to the case of a girl, very beautiful, as it appeared from the strike poster, who had been arrested at the age of 18, three months after her wedding, and had been sentenced to a full five years in prison, only because someone said that eight forgotten Molotov cocktails found in the basement of his house had been brought to him by her and her husband. In retrospect, now, in the provocative injustice with which Sophia was treated in her trial, I can see the complex of the promiscuous old age that dominated Greece at the time, against a young and beautiful girl who not only they could not arrest and make her stop protesting but she also challenged them, supporting ideas, such as anarchism, that were the most critical of them. I discern, that is, a sadism, such as that which masters always show against slaves whom nature, or fortune, has endowed with characteristics and values, which the masters envy. Just as the queen in the tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs commissions a witch to kill Snow White because she was jealous of her, so the judges, with the consent of all the old people, did everything they could to exterminate the anarchic Snow White who first time fell into their hands together with seven anarchists, and managed and escaped them with the suspensive effect of the appeal she made, and then with acquittal. And to return at that now so distant time, I must add that in support of Sophia's hunger strike, when it had exceeded about forty days, started hunger strikes too political prisoners from the Zirini case and women prisoners who knew Sophia and had admired her combativeness in the past, such as during the Korydallos Women's Prison uprising in 1980. Never before, at least after the post-dictatorship (1967-1974) period, had there been such a stir about a woman

prisoner so young and beautiful who had such a heavy sentence and so many years in prison, without, essentially, having done anything. The Greek state, in her case, wanted to make a show of power about how easily it can violate the guarantees given by the laws for the life and freedom of its citizens. We, the hunger strikers, and the people who stood with us had the law on our side and we were struggling to impose it on a state that, like military dictatorships and totalitarian communist regimes, did not respect it when it came to some of its defiant ideological opponents. Challenging even with their beauty. Because Sophia was defiantly beautiful to her persecutors. And, as I have found, beauty to poor and weak girls is a curse and not a blessing.

Before we reached the fiftieth day of our hunger strike, two more Irish political prisoners had died on hunger strike, one after 46 days on strike. We also saw that we were in danger, I perhaps less so, because I had done the in past 54 days of

hunger strike, in addition to many shorter ones, but the idea that Sophia could die and thus lose everything, had begun to become especially tormenting to me. But I couldn't see any other way. The ankylosis, which until then had been displayed by the gerontocracy against Sophia, was eye-popping, and if it did not become odious to the public now, when in Ireland the strikers were dying one after another and in Greece Sophia's parole was provocatively easy to grant, it would never become. So, things were indeed difficult and started to become more so, when Sophia, after fifty days of strike, had a heart episode and had to be transferred to an external hospital, to the General State Hospital of Nikaia. But, like my own transfer to Corfu after Scandalis and I were beaten by the guards, the news that Sophia was dying, started to create uncontrollable situations outside. When it was learned that Sophia was in the General State Hospital of Nicaia, a motorcade was spontaneously organized, the first in Greek history, from the center of Athens to the hospital in Nikaia, in which hundreds of motorcycles participated. The situation had even worried the bishop of Nikaea, who tried to see Sophia, to no avail. One can imagine how much it had worried the thousands of resistance fighters, who eight years before had seen the military dictatorship of 1967-1974 collapse and be replaced by a parliamentary democracy, in which many of them had secured good positions.

The three of us who were on strike for Sophia, more or less, learned everything from the newspapers. But we had learned about Sophia's heart attack from some people who had been informed about it at the mental hospital and were shouting to us from the windows of the mental hospital that Sophia is not well. Next to her, in the ward on the floor above us of the prisoner hospital where Sophia had been transferred, the political prisoner of the Zirini case, Mania Barsevski, went on a hunger strike in support of her. At that stage, Scandalis had gone out the window and was shouting for her to go out the window too and inform us firsthand. But, this time, Sophia's ward was not above us and whatever Barsevsky would say, the guards would also hear. That is why Barsevsky had asked to speak French with Giannis Scandalis, assuming that the guards would not know French. But neither Giannis knew nor any of us. So we missed the first hand update. Anyway, we managed and contacted Sophia after the episode and told her that if she was going to risk dying of a heart attack in order to continue the strike, it would be better if she stopped and just us continue it. So it happened. But we had already taken the people we wanted with us. From a gallop conducted by the magazine "Tachydromos" (courier), of the publishing group Lambrakis, among a sample of 600 people from the capital of the country, it emerged that most of them knew not only about the hunger strikes of the Irish but also about ours and, also, that most of them considered our demand just, as they considered the demands of the Irish.

Regarding, finally, the resistance fighters I mentioned earlier, one of the most well-known resistance fighters, university professor Sakis Karagiorgas, together

with the university professor Aliki Iotopoulou-Marangopoulou, managed to come and see us in the hospital. I also had Karagiorgas as a teacher in Panteio and I remembered that, when he wrote on the blackboard, he held the chalk with only his thumb and another finger, because he had lost the rest from a bomb that had exploded in his hands during the dictatorship. A bomb that would be planted somewhere as a protest against the dictatorship. Karagiorgas and Marangopoulou asked us to stop the strike, informing us that they had been assured by the government that Sophia would be released on July 24, when she would have completed two thirds of her sentence. But we did not accept, because we could not have confidence in such a ruthless government which, until then, had treated us as dangerous terrorists and abused us with impunity, without us having committed any serious act of revolutionary violence against it. So we continued until July 24, 1981, when Sophia completed three years and five months in prison and we reached 60 days of hunger strike. And, as Karagiorgas had assured us, Sophia was released from prison, but on the condition that she could not leave Greece and report to the police station in her neighborhood every fifteen days. Our epic fight (as I see it after so many years) was finally vindicated.

Sophia free – The much-tortured fighter of the "National Resistance"
Mitsos Maramis

In Northern Ireland, hunger strikes continued until 3 October, resulting in the deaths of four more strikers after Sophia's release. After their strike was halted, which resulted mainly from their relatives' decision to allow doctors to force-feed the strikers while they were comatose and unable to react, some of their demands were met, at least informally. We in Greece continued to serve our sentences in prisons, with the hope that Sophia, being out of prison, could do some things more to strengthen the support movement. Of course, we didn't demand that she deal with us immediately when she would come out. I, recognizing that she was entitled to a period of rest after so many years of suffering culminating in a fifty-day hunger strike, had suggested that she take a trip abroad. I dreamed that she would be away for some time from the jurisdiction of the Greek state, which until then had done her so much harm. In the end she didn't go abroad, maybe because she didn't want or couldn't make such a trip alone (anyway she was prohibited from leaving Greece). She only went for a few days to a seaside village in southern Crete, Myrtos, where she was hosted by a friend's sister and her husband. When she returned to Athens, the movement had weakened due to the summer holidays, so we had to wait until September to see what could be done. And, as happens every summer that many people is on vacation, every form of power,

finding a free field because of the lack of people to protest, rages. So that summer too must have been particularly painful for the prisoners, judging by what was happening even in the prisoners' hospital. The climate of that summer is shown by the following complaint which we took out to be published in the newspapers but none of them published it:

"GANGSTER STICKERS IN THE INFIRMARY OF THE PRISONERS' HOSPITAL"

Another characteristic episode of brutal abuse of a prisoner inside the Prisoners' Hospital with the complicity and participation of the medical and nursing staff took place in the early hours of Sunday 9-8-1981. The prisoner Gerodimos, recently operated on, because he persistently and repeatedly asked for a painkiller (!), was lured by the guard Manopoulos into the hospital's office, where he was immobilized by the nurse Kapandaris and punched to the point of blood by the aforementioned guard in the presence of the doctor on duty Moysopoulos. It should be noted that the above guard a short time ago brutally abused another prisoner, a 65-year-old man with an indwelling catheter, Dimitris Maramis, kicking him in the kidneys and head outside the infirmary. And doctor Moysopoulos, known from the lawsuits filed against him by the former prisoners for political charges Barsevsky and Kyritsis, is the only permanent doctor of the hospital and directly dependent on the Ministry of Justice. The lawsuits filed for the above outrageous abuses, as well as many others, did not change the prevailing situation in the slightest.

9-8-1981

KyriakosMoiras
Filippas Kyritsis
GiannisScandalis"

Mitsos Maramis, who is referred to as Dimitris Maramis in the denouncement, having come to the hospital from Korydallos prisons a long time ago because he had such a serious health problem that obliged him to have an indwelling catheter, had come to our ward and had met us since the time we did the hunger strike to get Sophia out. He had told us that he had previously spent several years in prison and exile because of his participation in the civil war on the side of the communists. In fact, being from Trikala in Thessaly and participating in the guerrilla since the time of the German occupation, he had personally met my father who had also participated in it. He admired us for the struggle we did and even told us that his son also participated in the marches that took place even outside the Korydallos prisons, at the time when we did the last strike. He was in prison because he chased a thug, who used to visit Maramis' cheese shop

and provoke him, with a cleaver. Maramis was both old and short and a communist, so he would have been an ideal target for a "tough man" obsessed with fascist ideas. But Mitsos Maramis in the prisons and camps had learned to fight for his rights, to the extent that, as he told us, he had once gone so far as to throw into the cauldron with the food intended for distribution to the prisoners, a boot size forty-five, as a protest about the food that was not at all edible. So one day he couldn't hold back any longer and attacked the thug with the cleaver, as a result of which he spent two years in prison, from what he told us. For me the memory of Maramis has been coupled with the feeling of absolute impotence to intervene in a sad story that is happening before your eyes. Specifically, sometime, I had found him slumped in the hospital corridor, having a fight with some large inmate, probably a ruffian, and shouting "help, guard, help"! Of course no guard paid any attention to him. Instead, after a while, he was kicked out of the hospital and sent back to Korydallos prison...

Theodoros Venardos "rebells" in the prisoners' hospital

I don't remember if it was that summer, or at some other time, that the famous "gladiola bandit" Theodoros Venardos had come to the prison hospital. But I remember that, when he had come, he had quarreled with Giannis Scandalis, who had known him for a long time, from the psychiatric hospital for prisoners, because Scandalis did nothing for him either, although, as Venardos thought, Scandalis had a great political power. Poor Venardos didn't understand that people only dealt with Scandalis and us when we were "with our backs against the wall", i.e. going on hunger strikes of several weeks, and then they went home, except for a few of our comrades who continued the struggle. Reading in the newspapers that so many people were taking to the streets for us and clashing with the police, he thought that all these people were our supporters, as if we were professional politicians... Finally, unable to come to an end with Scandalis, Venardos made a revolt on his own in the prisoners' hospital, nailing the door of his cell with spikes he had illegally found. The revolt didn't last long. The M.A.T. (riot police) came in after a few hours, broke down the door and took him away. To where; We never found out.

The "revolt" of Panagiotis Ganglias and Savvas Bamiatzoglou

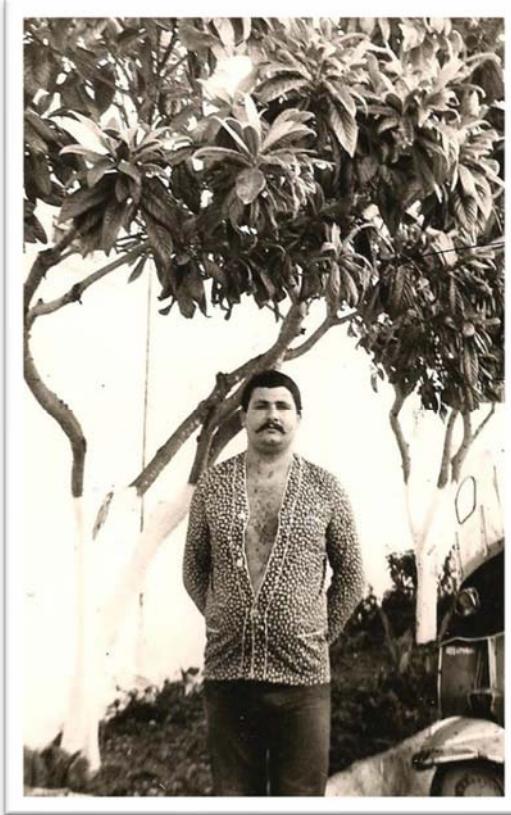
And another famous prisoner had wrangled with Giannis Scandalis in the prison hospital. This was Savvas Bamiatzoglou, known as MonteSavvas . I have mentioned him before, because I had made the acquaintance with him long time ago

during one of his stay in the prisoners' hospital. MonteSavvas was in the hospital when Sophia was also, during one of her strikes and he had made sure to take the hospital elevator to the second floor, to get to know her, even from afar, because the hospital wings had railings of bars, which prevented anyone coming out of the elevator from entering a wing, unless the guards who had the keys opened it for him. MonteSavvas was famous for being monstrous in size and having enormous physical strength. This enabled him, when he was taken to the courts for various offenses he was indicted every now and then, to make a great fuss and to terrorize the judges who, out of fear, would leave the seat in a hurry and dozens of policemen were needed to hold MonteSavvas. His strength was such that, once, I had seen him twist with his hands a rail of the railing of the hospital wing where we were kept! He had quarreled with Scandalis, because demanded to sit in a hospital wheelchair and as a friend, Scandalis, to wheel him around by pushing the wheelchair down the corridor. Scandalis could not bear such a thing, although he was petite and had half the height and dimensions of MonteSavvas. Scandalis was a fearless man, perhaps the most fearless man I have ever met. That is why he was not afraid of the bloodthirsty torturers who worked as guards at the disciplinary prisons of Corfu, and they, in order to subdue him, were beating him every time he was there, every day. MonteSavvas also had a great respect for my struggles and, when he was in the hospital, he would at the ward where I, Scandalis and Moiras were, and call me to come out and talk in the corridor. In fact, he had once asked me to make him some tea from what I was making for myself and the others. When I made it for him and he tasted it, although it was fragrant, he didn't like it and threw it away, because the only tea he drank was mountain tea. We never drank such tea. And he himself once offered me a small bottle of brandy to take a few sips. Alcohol, of any kind, was forbidden in the prisons, except for a beer given to each on Easter Day. But Montesava "greased" a guard and brought him brandy illegally. I had learned from MonteSavvas that he had entered the prisons as a teenager and was not so corpulent and strong then. But he had been the victim of a sexual assault by other prisoners and this had made him make it his life's goal to become very strong in order to take revenge on them. And, indeed, at one point when they had brought one of them into the hospital, MonteSavvas attacked him and kicked him out of the ward as well, demanding that the guards kick that guy out of the hospital altogether. He had dismantled, as I remember, an iron hospital bed and threatened anyone who approached him with evil intentions with the iron bed leg.

And he, in collaboration with Panagiotis Ganglias, had at some point "revolted" at the hospital, when they both learned that from the hospital they would be sent to the disciplinary prisons of Corfu. In order not to suffer the consequences of the sedition themselves they had forcibly grabbed a stool pigeon and made him to

shout from the windows of the hospital and from the window of the hospital toilet, which looked out from the prison complex to the apartment buildings opposite, the reasons for the sedition and its slogans. Of course, the reasons did not mention anything about Corfu. As well as the content of the slogans, the reasons for the sedition were related to the obscenities made by the guards and the management of the prisons against the prisoners. And at that stage, Scandalis and I had suggested to him and to Ganglias that we reveal to the journalists the reasons for the sedition. But they had not accepted, telling us that a game was being played, in which they did not want to involve us. Finally, this attitude also ended with the entry of M.A.T. at the hospital.

MonteSavvas, despite his bulk and the fear he caused, had something childish about him. When I met him he was in for the murder of some man of the night. Because of his naivety he told me that his dream was to become a drug dealer! He saw nothing wrong with this profession, as he saw drugs as a commodity, like everything else. I don't know if, after some time that he escaped from prison, he realized his dream. I only know that, some years later, in 1985, it was heard that the prison service had deliberately let him escape, because with his rebelliousness he had become a headache for the authorities of each prison, and one that they could not get rid of in any better way than to let him escape and be killed by the mafia working with guards, out of the prison. So, he was killed outside by the mafia working with prison guards and burned his body. After many years, maybe even twenty, in a broadcast by the journalist Nikoloulis, which I saw by chance on television, I heard about bones from seven corpses found in a cave in Crete, of which one was supposed to be that of MontesSavvas and the other of a friend of his, who was previously the lover of an associate of the well-known criminal Vangelis Rochamis. The one who had been convicted, among other things, for gang-raping two young women by him and his friends over several days, and for whom it was rumored that, when he was a prisoner in the prisons of Crete, he had been seen drinking tsikoudia (a local spirit) with guards in taverns out of the prison.



Savvas Bamiatzoglou, known as MonteSavvas , in the prison of Corfu. The photo he had given to me by himself

The "revolt" of Lambropoulos and of two young prisoners in the prisoners' hospital of Korydallos – Charilaos Siklis

I had also seen another prisoner make a "revolt" at the hospital. Lambropoulos, who had also become known for the denunciations he had made about the abominations that happen in prisons. He had also come, at some stage, to congratulate us on our fight and to tell us that, when he would go out, he would do something for us. From his "revolt" I remember him having roughly blocked the rail door of the ward, when there was no guard on the inside (in the wards or in the corridors), and grabbing a fire extinguisher and some iron lid from a large dustbin , with which, supposedly, he would fight his battle with the guards. To make himself more convincing, he had worn a wide white strip on his forehead, on which he had written "DEAD". This sedition ended after he was convinced that his request would be granted. I don't remember ever knowing his request.

I still remember two other prisoners who had revolted. In fact, when they had brought them to the hospital, they had come and told us that they belonged to E.L.A. (in the Revolutionary People's Struggle) and that they were behind some action at a bus depot. I did not like by this confidence and could not believe it, because I believe that those who participate in revolutionary organizations do not talk about it to others. These prisoners, after a few days in the hospital, had also been barricaded in a ward. I remember that from outside, at that time, a prisoner who was considered one of the toughest prisoners in the prison, Charilaos Siklis, had come and was cursing and threatening them. This behavior of his strengthened the suspicions I had of him, on account of some rumors in circulation, that he was a stool pigeon. I don't remember how this stop ended nor did I ever learn the requests. But I remember Siklis well, because there was a time, that autumn, when Siklis came to our room every day with a cup of Turkish coffee in his hand, stood opposite our beds and with the cup in his hand talked to us for hours, without meaning to listen to our answers. Every now and then he sipped his coffee, which, surprisingly, never ran out. After speaking to us for a few hours, he would always leave abruptly, always after completing the same period of speaking time, as if he had a clock inside him. And yet I had never seen him look at a watch! He was talking to us about the struggles he had made in the past in prisons, in which he had been in and out since he was young, and now he was old. From what he told us, I only remember that he was a prosecution witness against the defendants in the A.S.P.I.D.A. case, who were army officers, who in the mid-60s had been accused of, together with the son of the prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, conspiring to stage a communist coup within the army.

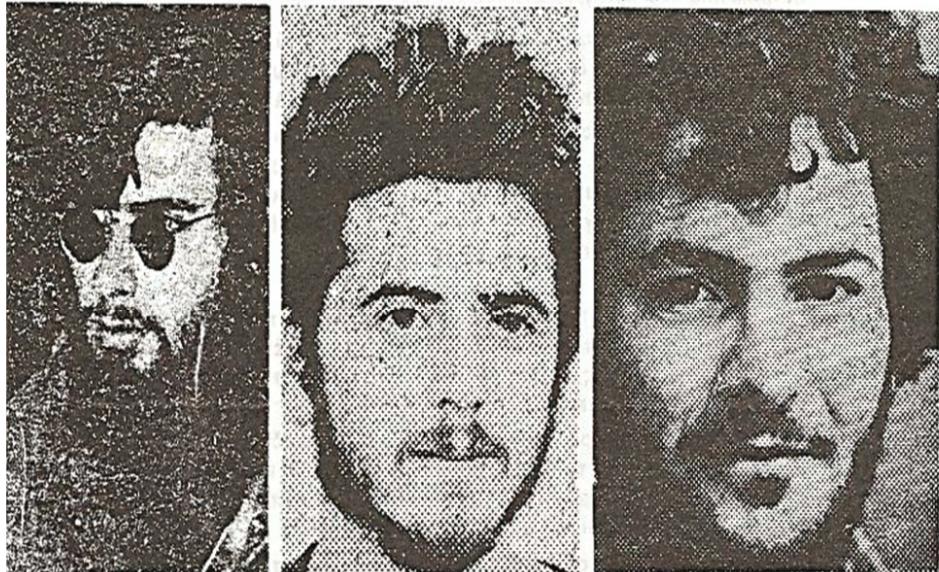
[Breaking up with Sophia – The lawyer sent to us by the legendary babe of the classic Greek cinema, Katerina Gogou: Lina Karanasopoulou](#)

As time passed, we began to pressurize Sophia, who would come and see us in the hospital ward, in order to organize demonstrations demanding our release. Differences, then, began to appear between us in matters of tactics, which unfortunately took such an extent that when the well-known actress of the old Greek cinema, Katerina Gogou, who supported us, sent us a new lawyer, Lina (Maria) Karanasopoulou, to take over for us, we entrusted Karanasopoulou with our representation in the support movement. This was considered by Sophia to be enough for keeping her distance from us and we could no longer expect much from her. I don't know whether she was influenced in this decision by Cain, an uninvited patron of the anarchist space, who until then had issued proclamations by himself signing "Cain the criminal and his white mouse" and who appeared in

Sophia as our most fanatical supporter and advocate of our release. How much, without even having contact with us, this person managed to take the initiative in the support movement, is shown by the fact that the only posters I have in my file that refer to the struggles that I, Scandalis and Moiras did after Sophia's release, in order to be released from prison, are his.

Anyway, in October there was another demonstration of support in the Propylaia of the University of Athens, during which the following proclamation of Sophia was circulated. From what Karanasopoulou told us, about two hundred people must have taken part in this demonstration. A little, in relation to the number of people we needed to make the government feel the support movement for us. But apart from the people who descended on the street for us, we seemed to have some influential people with us, such as two other lawyers who came and saw us at that time, Gitsa Sitaridou and Tasia Christodoulou. Later I learned that Sitaridou, who was also a very beautiful girl, had been badly beaten by the police in a demonstration for us, in which she had participated.

29/9/1981 - ΕΚΛΕΙΣΑ ΠΙΑ ΤΟΥΣ 2 ΜΗΝΕΣ ΕΞΩ ΑΠΟ ΤΗ ΦΥΛΑΚΗ



Φ. Κυρίτσης

Γ. Σκανδάλης

Κ. Μοίρας

Μετά 3,5 χρόνια άργης, καθημερινής έξόντωσης και θασανιστηρίων μέσα στις φυλακές κι ένω δέν ύπάρχει πά περιθώριο ούτε γιά έπιθισή μου στή φυλακή, όταν ή δλοκλήρωση της έξόντωσής μου φτάνει στό τέλος της, άναγκαστηκα νά θάλω όσες δυνάμεις μού είχαν άπομείνει, τή ζωή μου, φραγμό σ' αύτή τήν δλοκλήρωση του έγκληματος και νά διεκδικήσω τό δικαίωμα στή ζωή. Και γιά αλλη μά φορά οι σύντροφοι Φίλιππας Κυρίτσης, Γιάννης Σκανδάλης και Κυριάκος Μοιράς άρνηθήκανε τήν έξόντωση και διεκδικήσανε μαζί μου τήν άποφυλάκισή μου, μ' άπεργία πείνας και κίνδυνο τής ζωής τους.
29/9/1981. "Ηδη έχω κλείσει 2 μήνες άπό τήν άποφυλάκισή μου. Μετά άπό άπεργία πείνας 50 ήμερών και πού στή διάρκειά της ή ζωή μου παιχτήκε κορώνα-γράμματα, μετά άπό άπεργία πείνας 60 ήμε-

ρῶν τῶν συντρόφων, κατορθώθηκε ἡ ἀποφυλάκισή μου, πού είταν πιά ζῆτημα ζωῆς καί θανάτου.

Αὐτή τῇ στιγμῇ, οἱ σύντροφοι, μὲ ἔντονα προβλήματα ύγειας, ἐξακολουθοῦν νά θρίσκονται στό νοσοκομεῖο κρατουμένων καί νά ἔχουν καί τὴν εἰδική κακομεταχείριση πού ἐπιβάλλεται σέ φυλακισμένους ἐπαναστάτες. Ὁ θόρυβος τῆς ἀπεργίας ἔχει πιά τελειώσει. Ὁ θόρυβος τοῦ ἄνθρακος η θά πεθάνω κατασιγάστηκε. Τίποτα δύμως δέν τελειώνει καί δέν ἔχει ξεχαστεῖ, δσο τὸ κράτος συνεχίζει νά ἐφαρμόζει τέτια σχέδια ἐξόντωσης. Οἱ σύντροφοι ἐξακολουθοῦν νά σαπίζουν στίς φυλακές καί στά νοσοκομεῖα.

Στίς φυλακές Βόλου, στίς φυλακές τοῦ Κορυδαλλοῦ, στό νοσοκομεῖο κρατουμένων καί ὅπου ἀλλοῦ, οἱ Ταπούτης Γ., Σπυρόπουλος Π., Καραμπατάκης, Συμεωνίδης, Μπάρλος, Καλαποδόπουλος.

Κι οἱ Φίλιππας Κυρίτσης, Γιάννης Σκανδάλης, καί Κυριάκος Μοίρας μέθερείς καταδίκες, βάζουν πάντα τίς ζωές τους φράχτη στήν ἐξόντωση πού τούς ἔχει κανονίσει τό κράτος. Μεσαιωνικά βασανιστήρια, ξυλοδαρμοί, ἀπαγορεύσεις, τόσα καί τόσα πού ἔχουν καταγγελθεῖ ἐπανειλημένως, είναι ή κάθε ὥρα, ή κάθε μέρα πού θγάζουν στίς φυλακές.

Κι ἐνῶ ὅλοι ξέρουν πιά πώς είναι «ἀποδιοπομπαῖοι τράγοι» πολιτικῶν σκοπιμοτήτων καί σκευωριῶν. «Ολοι ξέρουν πώς ἔτσι τούς πληρώθηκε ἡ ἄρνησή τους νά ύποταχτοῦν καί νά γίνουν συνένοχοι στά ἐγκλήματα αὐτῆς τῆς κοινωνίας.

Ἡ «προεκλογική περίοδος βαίνει καλῶς» μέθερείς, λόγους καί... καί... κλείνοντας τά μάτια μπροστά στό ἐγκλήμα πού διαπράττεται. Κανείς δέν μπορεῖ νά μοῦ ἐγγυηθεῖ τίποτα, είμαι σίγουρη, ή ἀντοχή ἔχει ὥρια καί οἱ σύντροφοι ἀργοπεθαίνουν.

«Ἄν τώρα ἐξακολουθοῦν ὅλοι κι ὁ κάθε «έλευθερα σκεπτόμενος» νά κάνει τά στραβά μάτια, στήν ἐπερχόμενη ὀλοκληρωτική ἐξόντωσή τους θά είναι ὑπεύθυνος δολοφονίας. Πρέπει ἐπιτέλους νά κλείσει μιά καί καλή ὁ φάκελλος τῆς ἐξόντωσης τους, πρέπει ἐπιτέλους νά ἀπαιτηθεῖ καί νά ἀπαιτηθεῖ ἀμεσα, τώρα ή ἀπελευθέρωσή τους.

«Οποιος ἐξακολουθεῖ νά μή δίνει σημασία σέ αὐτή τή χυδαία δολοφονία, ἔχει πνίξει τόν ἀνθρώπο πού είχε μέσα του καί τό αίμα αὐτῶν πού ἐπιμένουν καί παλεύουν νά παραμείνουν ἀνθρώποι θά γίνει ό ἐφιάλτης του.

Γιά μιά κοινωνία πού δέν θά είναι φυλακή, γιά μιά κοινωνία ἐλευθερίας, δημιουργίας κι ἀπόλαυσης τῆς ζωῆς.

— ΑΜΕΣΗ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΩΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΤΩΝ ΚΡΑΤΟΥΜΕΝΩΝ!

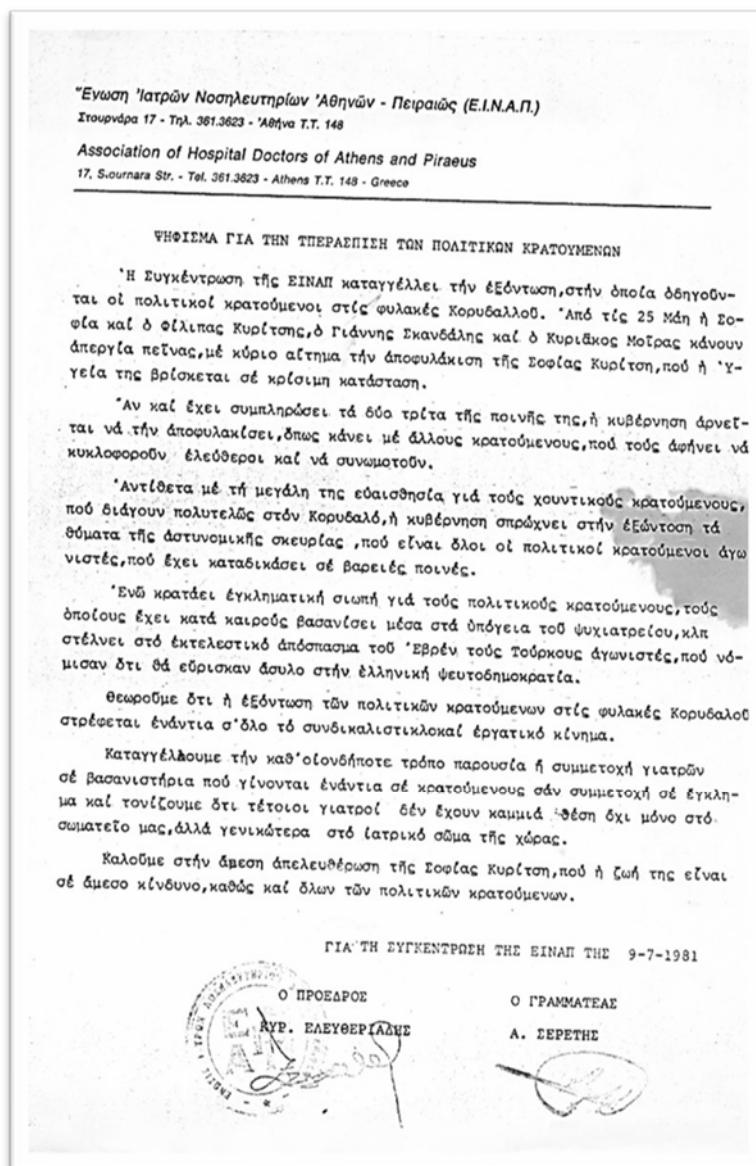
·Αθήνα
29/9/1981

Σοφία Κυρίτση

The proclamation that Sophia issued in her attempt to gather support for the movement for us, from as many as she could of those who had supported her release from prison.

It could not be considered too much to hope that we would be released from prison before serving our sentences. The penalties were excessive and as such had been recognized by enough people. If the many people who had supported us

until then considered us hardened criminals, as the state presented us, "terrorists" to be exact, they would not have protested our ill-treatment or demanded Sophia's release. And I'm not just referring to anarchists. Even the Association of Physicians of Athens and Piraeus Hospitals had supported our struggle, as can be seen from the following resolution:



The resolution of E.I.N.A.P. which certified that our struggle had already gone beyond the narrow limits of our ideological comrades and had begun to sensitize wider forces of society.

Parliamentary elections - The famous "Change": The Panhellenic Socialist Movement for the first time in power

After all, October 1981 was a month of great changes. Elections had been announced and everything showed that, for the first time since the Second World War, it would not be the conservative political forces, in whatever form i.e. right or far-right, but the so-called progressive ones, which had gathered in the socialist party PA.SO.K. headed by a historical figure: The son of the last prime minister elected before the 1967-1974 dictatorship, Georgios Papandreu, who was overthrown in a coup by the deep state in 1965: The internationally renowned economist Andreas Papandreu, whom the dictatorship had imprisoned as soon as had taken power in 1967. This party had repeatedly, through its representatives, supported our struggle and one of its most distinguished candidates for parliament, Evangelos Giannopoulos, who had been an advocate of Yiannis Serfis, as well as Scandalis and me and Sophia in the Supreme Court, as I have already mentioned, before the elections he assured my mother that "PA.SO.K. would get us out." The central slogan of this party was "Change" and we felt that such a change, given the injustice that had been done to us and the support of the people we had gathered, could be hoped for. Our supporters also tried to keep our hope alive, such as the former political prisoner Isabella Bertrand, who in the pre-election time they had given on television for her party, the "K.K.E.-M.L." (Communist Party of Greece-Marxist-Leninist), had included in her speech and the request for our release.

Indeed, as predicted by the voters' surveys, PA.SO.K. won the election and formed a government on his own. Of course, as an institutional guarantor of the continuity of the deep state, the President of the Republic, former Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis, who, predicting, already in 1980, that his party would not win the elections again for many years, had taken care and ensured for himself the position of the President of the Republic which at that time had too many powers. For many people, as usual, the power of the deep state was underestimated and therefore, the end of the "dominion of the gendarme", as the dominance of the conservative faction had been established in the consciousness of many people, was celebrated with feasts and joys. And in the prisons a great disturbance had begun, for the prisoners expected some amnesty, at least for a part of the prisoners. This unrest began to see the light of day through newspaper articles about the unacceptable conditions of detention in almost all prisons. The responsible ministers of PA.SO.K. tended to "listen" to the prisoners' complaints about the unacceptable conditions: the Minister of Justice Stathis Alexandris and the Minister of Health and Welfare Paraskevas Avgerinos, who also visited the prisoners' hospital, to see the mess with their own eyes. During their visit,

Charilaos Siklis stopped them and told them to visit our ward as well and not just the cells of the prisoners of the common penal law. Since they were accompanied by journalists, it was not easy for them to bypass us, so they also came to our ward, where we directly discussed our release from prison. After all, Alexandris had made statements in favor of our struggle, from the time when he was still a member of the PA.SOK. I will never forget his modesty, when he introduced himself as "Alexandris lawyer" and I retorted "and now Minister". I cannot say, however, that the ministers had in mind any procedure for our release. We asked for amnesty, but Alexandris insisted that they would not be able to get the majority of the parliament to vote for such a law. They left, after Alexandris told us that he would entrust our case to his son, who was also a lawyer, in case he might find some way to legally release us from prison.



From the visit of the two ministers of the government of PA.SO.K. in the prisoners' hospital. From left to right: Eleni Vlachou head nurse, Paraskevas Avgerinos, Stathis Alexandris, Eleni Koutandou head nurse and me.

We ask amnesty from PA.SO.K. - My twelfth hunger strike

The truth is that for the new government we were beginning to be a big problem and that was the reason why its ministers would prefer to avoid us. We were in trouble, because one week after the rise of PA.SO.K. in power, not seeing any movement towards our release, we went on a hunger strike again. Our request is release from prison in the form of amnesty, as I mentioned above. Of course, we were not asking for amnesty just for the three of us, but for all political prisoners of the "left" (although anarchists should not be lumped together with communists under the label of the left). The government's problem, as Alexandris explained to us when he saw us, was that for many Greeks political prisoners were considered also the prisoners belonging to the military junta (1967-1974), who had been in prison since 1974, and the fascist bombers. He considered impossible an amnesty for which only we would be political prisoners. And of course, when Alexander's son came and saw us, he had nothing more to say to us than to stop the strike, because he didn't have any procedure for our release from prison to propose. In fact, unable to do anything, he assigned our case to a lecturer or vice-chancellor of the University of Thrace, Giannis Panousis. And Panoussis, when he came and saw us, he didn't have anything specific in his mind about how we were going to get out, so all he had to suggest to us was to stop the strike. We knew that if we stopped the strike we would not get out for the rest of the century, but by continuing it we had hopes of getting out, because it would be very difficult for the socialist government to let the most famous imprisoned revolutionaries die of a hunger strike, as it would be also very difficult to force feed them. After so many hunger strikes that the three of us had done and after so many beatings, especially for Scandalis and Moiras, the government saw that, even if it didn't get us out of prison this time, we would be for it a constant headache. Because of our militancy, we were a bad example for the other prisoners. We would continue to struggle and the government could not treat us more harshly than even the previous government that called us terrorists. So, we continued the strike and the days passed. The day commemorating the Polytechnic massacre arrived and passed, without extensive incidents and deaths this time, and we were still inside striking. In fact, that day, my brother had gone to stick small pieces of paper demanding our release, at the Polytechnic University and fell into the hands of the K.N.E. (Communist Youth of Greece) was considered a stool pigeon, since it was defending three anarchists (although Scandalis was not an anarchist), and was taken violently to the rector of the Polytechnic, for further punishment. Fortunately the rector turned out to be less "rebellious" than the K.N.E. members and let my brother go free.

That was then the behavior of K.N.E. towards the most well-known imprisoned revolutionaries who were on strike, regardless of whether the K.K.E. newspaper, "Rizospastis", followed the strike with positive interest and communicated its progress to its audience with small notes. The Knites (members of K.N.E.) were not interested in knowing by that time, not even the interest of the "academic community" in us. Proof of this interest was the visit made to us at the hospital by the Panteio's philosophy professor and later rector and academic Kostas Despotopoulos. When he came to see us, during our last hunger strike, he told us that he had tried to see us during the previous strike as well, but they had not let him and that is why he had sent Karagiorgas and Maragopoulou in his place. I liked this professor, because I had read in the "History of Makronissos" by Nikos Margaris, that Despotopoulos had also been a political prisoner in Makronissos. I also had him as a teacher at Panteio. However, when I told him the incident of his imprisonment in Makronissos, Despotopoulos had told me that he was not a hero, because he had ended up in Makronissos due to a mistake by the prosecuting authorities. He had been imprisoned instead of a cousin of him.

The second big concert for us at the indoor stadium of the Sporting sports club

Our sympathizers outside, seeing time pass, us reaching fifty days of hunger strike and the government making a fool of themselves, decided to press the situation in the most impressive way they could: The concert. It was therefore decided to organize another big concert at the Sporting indoor stadium, in Agios Eleftherios, as was the case in 1979. This time Katerina Gogou also "weighed" with her presence on the organizing committee of the concert. In order to rent the stadium, Katerina had then given 20,000 drachmas, quite a large amount for that time. Dionysis Savopoulos, who had participated in the 1979 concert as well, singing "Vary zeibekiko gia ton Nikos", announced the new concert through his radio show. Also on the radio, he had requested our release, for humanitarian reasons I think. After all this and with so many well-known artists who came to sing, such as Haris Alexiou who had also supported the organization of the concert with 20,000 drachmas, it was only natural that the concert should have a success similar to that of the 1979 concert. I found out later that Nikolas Asimos also sang at the new concert but, because he appeared like a madman at the time, had faced difficulties until he got on stage. I could say that it was the fear of incidents after the concert, as they had been after the previous concert at Sporting, that made the government, on the day of the concert, assure the journalists that they would get us out of jail. And indeed there were no extensive incidents with arrests and trials and the government finally found the formula that would get us out of prison. This

was the offer of grace for us from the Council of Graces on request by the government and not by us, something we had already done clear that we did not intend to ask. It would be based on a law of the dictatorship, a law of 1968, which Evangelos Yiannopoulos, I think then Minister of Labor, had found. So, the proposal was made and naturally it was accepted by the Council of Graces and ended up with the President of the Republic, Karamanlis, to sign it. And he, as a clever politician, although in 1977, as prime minister, he declared that anarchy "will be crushed in its infancy", he signed it. He didn't want to take personal responsibility for what might happen if we died or were force-fed.

Finally free after 60 days of hunger strike

So we reached the day of our release after 60 days of hunger strike. The release was offered to us as a Christmas present, because the next day was Christmas. It also had its share of suspense, to tell the truth. Specifically, the warden of the hospital had come to our ward and asked us to get dressed, take our things and go downstairs to the director's office, where the competent prosecutor would read the pardon document in the presence of two soldiers, as the procedure stipulated. We thought all this with the soldiers was nonsense and asked them to come and read us the grace in our room. The warden told us that it was forbidden for soldiers to enter the hospital with their weapons, so we were obliged to go down. When we continued to refuse to come down, he threatened us that if we didn't come down, the prosecutor would leave with the soldiers and thus we would remain in prison. Before we made a final decision on what to do, the warden would give us some time, leaving to return later. When the warden left I told the others that, as I had read, when in the Boyatiou camp, where they had Alexandros Panagoulis in a concrete dungeon, in 1973, they had come to tell him that he had been pardoned, like all political prisoners, by the dictator Papadopoulos, and therefore he would have to pack his things and leave, Panagoulis had told them that he was not moving and so they had to carry him up to the outer gate of the camp. He didn't stay inside because he wouldn't leave on his own and that's what would happen to us. Indeed, after a while the warden came and told us to pack up and leave, without having to go through the process. So we gathered our things, including a box with about fifty books from the anarchist publications "Eleftheros Typos" that its publisher Giorgos Garbis had sent me from time to time for free. I thought it good not to take these books with me, but to leave them with Giannis Petropoulos, who in those days had managed to be in the hospital and was seeing us, in order to spread the anarchist ideas inside the prisons. Petropoulos, before we left, asked us for the phone number of any lawyer of the movement, since he still had many years of prison ahead of him being a lifer, and he would need him. I gave him the phone

number of the lawyer that Katerina Gogou had sent us, Lina Karanasopoulou. As it would later turn out, this lawyer would very warmly support Petropoulos and play a very important role in his later life, both in and out of prison.